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BY AGNES ROTHERY



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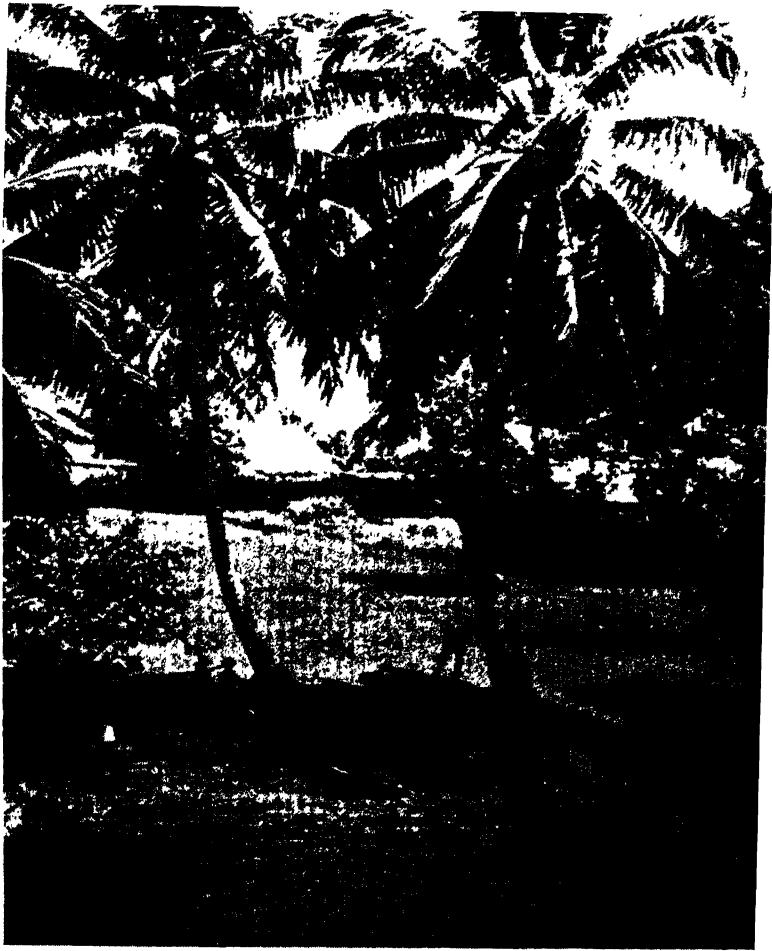
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IMAGES OF THE
TIERRA CALIENTE

▼

*"This is strength.
This firm carved rock
Cut to a measured length
Holds in a block
Pride and grief
Passion unspent
Life in austere relief
Made permanent.
Ask no more.
Seek not nor reach.
This meaning was before
A softer speech.
Words are sand
Slipping away.
Carve with a steady hand
What you would say."*

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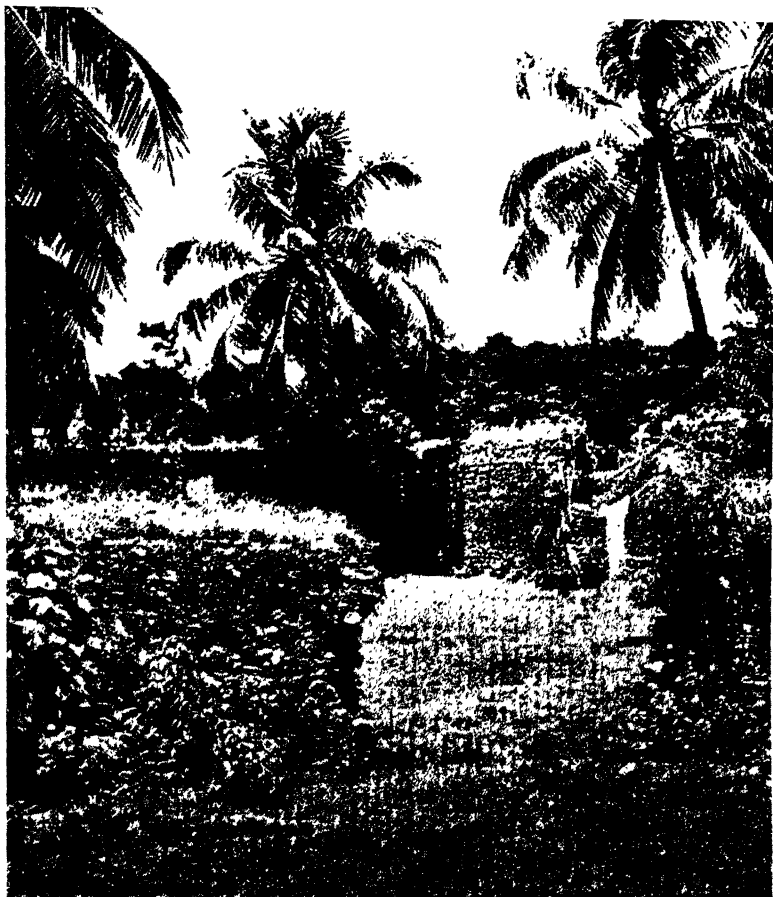


Where the warm waves slap upon the beach, and the coconut
palms slant against the sky.



PHOTO-SPORT

For fifteen hundred years the stelæ of Quirigua have held themselves erect upon this soil.



Lizards dart through the crevices of Fort San Felipe, lianas
pull its walls to earth.



Where a small bayou slips into the river, man ventures again
to impress his signature upon the scene.



IMAGES OF THE TIERRA CALIENTE



THE train breathes in difficult puffs as it forces its way up from sea level into the attenuating altitude. It has left the shore where the warm waves slap upon the beach and the coconut palms slant against the sky and, clinging to the ascending narrow-gauge rails, it is crawling through a tunnel whose walls are formed by the trunks and branches, the leaves and blossoms, of tropical vegetation.

An Indian is standing upon the lower step of the platform, one arm loosely crook'd through the hand rail. He holds an

ear of maize from which, occasionally, he nibbles a single kernel. His face is impassive, his pose immobile.

The Indian is contemplating the landscape as it is mechanically unrolled before him by the progress of the train. But he is not conscious of contemplation. This tunnel of steaming green is as familiar to him as the walls of the subway to a New Yorker. The banana trees with their crimson pendulous blossom are as intimately dear as an apple orchard to New England eyes. He passes through accustomed scenes: a settlement of adobe huts whose inhabitants crowd out to watch the train go by, the women in red garments, the children in no garments at all. Buzzards perch upon the fence posts and pigs grunt and nozzle in the yard. From the settlement straggles a road which is black rutted mud in the dry season and liquefies into a canal in the rainy months. Along it a two-wheeled wooden cart is being dragged by oxen whose heads are bowed beneath their yokes.

The Indian acknowledges these people and their dwellings as his. He retains no memory of his Mayan ancestors who, in this selfsame region fifteen hundred years ago, raised temples and sculptured monoliths of symbolic form, engraving upon them hieroglyphics and astronomical figures and intricate solar and lunar calendars. There, where he is now passing, and hidden from the track by a mere curtain of forest greenery—there settle heavily into the earth stone stelæ engraved before the birth of Christ into patterns still discernible and still beautiful. But the Indian comprehends nothing of the meaning of these grotesques and glyphs or their eroded tracery.

Neither does he ponder over those Spanish conquerors who, four centuries ago, with sword and cross hacked their way

through this breathless tangle of barbed cactus and spiky corozo, up to the cooler plateaux, converting and slaughtering as they went: baptizing and enslaving.

There—with treetops pushing through the fallen roof, with rope-like lianas tearing at fragments of belfry and pillar—crumbles what was once a Spanish church. Broken steps sweep up to a doorless nave; only the sky is framed by the empty circle of the rose window; birds make their nests in the niches which held the statues of the saints. The jungle has claimed the temple of the conquerors as it claimed, long before, the temple of the conquered.

The Indian nibbles another kernel of maize.

A tourist in the railway coach tosses an empty match box out of the window and it glances past the figure swaying upon the swaying step of the platform. He does not notice it. He is no more aware of the tourist invasion which is just beginning than of the Spanish invasion which has passed, than of the Mayan civilization which has been obliterated. He does not turn to look at the pale-faced foreigners who rush out of the railway coaches at each stop and rush back into them as the train starts. These things, these people, are as nothing to the man who might be an image with its eyes directed over the prospect.

The river that now races beside the iron tracks, the hot springs sending up their vapours, the swirling waterfalls—the Indian is sensible of this moisture and this music. The wild parrots, squawking as they fly through thickets of banana and bamboo—he hears their voices. He smells the sudden pungence of gardenias and tuberoses; he scents the black soil being ploughed by oxen whose slowness is slower than suspended motion. He notes the long slender nests of the oriole

swinging, swinging from the branches of the trees above the river's brim.

The Indian is seeing, smelling, sensing these things because he is part of them. He is sprung from the soil and made from it as the First Man was made from dust and Divine Breath. His face reflects the warm colour of the earth. His bare feet press upon mould and sand. The Indian plucks his food from the ground, cooks it in a vessel of baked mud and consumes it squatting upon a clod. He sleeps stretched on the dirt floor of his hut, and when at last he comes to die he is slipped into his grave with no coffin between his clay and that of its primal element.



IN THE JUNGLE



MONSTROUS stone monoliths are ranged about what in its greenish twilight and perpetual dampness seems more like a crypt below the ground than a clearing above it. The trunks of the trees are the close vaulting; the winding lianas are the ribbing. Even the fierce tropical sunshine is bleached and thinned before it penetrates through tapestries of leaves and ferns. The floor is treacherous. The air is of the tomb.

For fifteen hundred years the stelæ of Quirigua have held themselves erect upon this soil that slips and sinks beneath

the pressure of a human foot. For fifteen hundred years they have exposed to dampness and drought their images of priests and parrots, of serpents and sceptres, their hieroglyphic signs which record the ordered movement of the sun and moon and certain planets, and compute cycles of time throughout three thousand centuries.

Who were these Mayas that, from their nightly towers, sifted the stars in their hands and weighed them as gold dust? Not the Hindus, not the Greeks, not the Romans, reached so far or calculated so precisely among the heavenly constellations. When the Saxons were skin-clad barbarians in the forests of North Germany, Mayan scholars were evolving a written language. While the Egyptians and Assyrians were limited to depicting man and beast in profile, the Mayan sculptor and painter had mastered foreshortening and perspective. Whither they vanished and why, abandoning their temples and monuments at the apex of their glory, is folded in mystery. The sculptured dates on the calendar stones stop abruptly: there is no decadence of architecture, no evidence of waning in the sciences.

Did a sudden plague blot out the population? Was the fecund soil exploited to exhaustion? Or—more frightening, more deadly—did malignancy creep through the particles of air, vitiating what had been dry, healthful climate into this breathless humidity? Perhaps the great catastrophe found its fuel in a realm no meteorologist or geographer attempts to chart. A single figure may have materialized from the swarming population and, whether piping upon the sweet promise of a better land or trumpeting the doom of this, hypnotized the people into a migration whose course we have yet to trace.

The accumulated debris of centuries has sifted over the

walls of the courtyards. Whatever the archæologists discover and exhume during the dry season the savage vegetation obliterates during the rainy months. It is a war between man, who must struggle to get himself, his tools and his provisions through the miasmas and morasses to reach the scene of battle, and the jungle, which exultantly sucks nourishment from these selfsame elements.

It would seem that only gigantesque symbols of rock are able to withstand disintegration in a crypt such as this of Quirigua. But there are things more eternal than graven images.

They tell a story about two men who came to excavate the ruins and to reconstruct one of these lost cities of the Mayas.



A LOST CITY



THE man at the head of the expedition was named Randall Franklin and his assistant was Sven Thorvaldsen, a Swede. They were both young men—Randall not yet thirty, Sven five or six years older—and they were both in earnest in regard to the work they had undertaken. But here the resemblance between them ends.

Randall seems to have been one of those fortunate mortals who can announce with confidence: "A star danced and under that was I born." He was well set up, with clear blond skin and hair and a solid social and financial inheritance.

Despite the ease which had always been his portion he had applied himself so heartily to his chosen study that his appointment, by an important research foundation, as archæologist in charge of this expedition to Guatemala was entirely appropriate.

Sven Thorvaldsen, on the other hand, was irritably askew: a dark, narrow-faced Swede who had been drifting around Peru and Jamaica, Panama and Central America, for half a dozen years, sometimes picking up employment which was interesting and well paid—for he was capable, highly educated, and had the bearing of a gentleman—and sometimes practically starving. His restlessness, his recklessness, were to blame, of course, and also some twist in his emotional nature. He was never satisfied, and whatever he grasped either proved a disappointment or dissolved as he seized it. Certain oblique references he made to Father Alvarez indicate that he had reached that psychological point where a drifter decides he has had enough of drifting, enough of odd jobs which are neither worthy nor lucrative. He had had experience with archæological expeditions before, had picked up sufficient knowledge to pass as an ethnologist, and he accepted Randall's offer with the idea of achieving definite distinction in this field. Something had forced him to the sobering realization that this was his last chance to pull out of that current of human flotsam which washes the shores of Latin America as eternally as the Gulf Stream. Randall's prestige and backing made the opportunity exceptional. Randall himself, buoyant, clear-headed, confident of success, typified salvation for the man who had come to expect frustration in every new venture. Sven admired Randall—and hated him.

Probably no one analysed this until the shocking climax

which occurred at the end of the first month, when the party had settled down to the routine of excavation, photographing, measuring, and map-making.

It is difficult to say where the story really begins. Probably the first pages were written long ago in Sven's boyhood in a gloomy forest near Uppsala, where may still be found remains of the great metal kettles which, in barbarian times, were used for sacrifices to Bal. In this forest the blind god Hörder, who was the Lord of Darkness or Winter, slew Balder, the Lord of Light. Doubtless the boy Sven listened to the legends of how his pagan ancestors had sought to propitiate Hörder by sacrificing their children and possessions to him; once even, in time of drought, by offering him their king.

However, we can merely surmise this from fragments of talk around the camp in off hours: fragments, because Sven did not, as a rule, have much to say, and also because Randall was too absorbed in writing up his field notes, making maps, and developing his films to pay much attention to the other's infrequent remarks, or to remember them in detail after the affair was over. Doubtless there were many small incidents leading up to the denouement, which, if they had not prepared Randall for it, would at any rate have explained it, more or less, afterwards. But these shadowy portents are lost—lost in the deeper blackness of the jungle and in the brighter light of Randall's cheerful objectiveness.

The story of that last day—and night—can be reconstructed chiefly through Father Alvarez, who had been on his semi-annual tour of marrying and baptizing in the region, and happened to have stopped at the camp for overnight shelter. The padre, whose eyes were accustomed to observe, noted that Sven, whom he remembered from a previous meeting as

stiffly uncommunicative, was in a state of suppressed elation as he returned to camp that afternoon, accompanied only by an Indian *mozo*.

He greeted the padre with unexpected cordiality and seemed rather pleased to learn that Randall, who had gone out on a reconnoitring expedition early that morning, had not yet returned.

"I'll have a surprise for him when he does get back," he told Father Alvarez. "I believe my luck turned today."

He looked as if something unexpectedly good had indeed come his way since he left the clearing in the forenoon in company with an unknown Indian, who had turned up volunteering to take him to a place no white man had yet seen.

Father Alvarez, who was wise in the ways of waiting, did not urge the other's confidence. He was not mistaken in thinking that it would come as soon as Sven had got rid of his notebook and machete, paid off the guide, and come out into that space, partially enclosed by a broken wall of the temple, which served as their camp. For once Sven's secretiveness was overcome by the human impulse to talk. This is what he told Father Alvarez.

The Indian had led him through the jungle, not a very great distance but along a complicated trail it would have been impossible to discover without his guidance, and had brought him to a clearing neither he nor Randall had heard of—whose existence they had not even suspected. But although the place was so hidden from intruders, it was evidently well known to the Indians, for there was plenty of evidence of it having been frequently and recently traversed. Indians had had a cornfield here and after cutting the bush had burned it off, so that the site was unexpectedly and completely revealed.

It was marked off by a double row of stone pillars higher than a man, set close so that they formed a sort of fence, and at the end stood an enormous stela carved, upon the side facing the pillars, into an extraordinarily well-preserved figure in full face, carrying in his hands the Ceremonial Bar in the form of a conventionalized serpent, and standing upon four hieroglyphs.

One glance showed Sven that the monolith was remarkable, not so much in the idea of its design, as in the beauty of that design and its finely executed detail. The headdress, which consisted of two fantastic masks, filled the stone to the very top, while the sides were balanced by sweeping feathers of geometric pattern. After a moment of astonished and admiring contemplation, Sven whipped out pencil and paper and, after roughly outlining the site, began to sketch the stela.

He worked as rapidly as he could and in growing excitement, for the more he studied the towering figure the more he was convinced that it was the most elaborate and best preserved specimen of Maya sculpture he had ever seen *in situ*, in museums, or even in photographs. Certain of its glyphs had so escaped erosion that they could be clearly deciphered, and might throw needed light on the computation and analysis of the Maya calendar. He would, of course, return the next day with his camera, and with material to take accurate measurements and to make rubbings and paper squeezes.

But in the meanwhile he was conscious of an inexplicable urgency to catch what he could before the darkness fell. "Hurry! Hurry!" he kept saying to himself, although a mighty monolith which had stood a thousand years was not likely to disappear that afternoon. Not likely to, but in that strange

region which seems lifted out of existing time and even existing space it is the unforeseen which sometimes happens.

He had taken a few measurements and sketched the outline of the principal figure and the hieroglyphs when he realized that the great brooding face had changed its proportions: that it was, at that very moment, undergoing a subtle transformation. During the hour he had been drawing, it had foreshortened; the headdress was tilted towards him; the hieroglyphs were in puzzling shadow. Suddenly he realized what was happening. The stela was toppling—it was falling! And, even as he bounded to his feet and rushed to one side, it fell, crushing the smaller stone pillars like kindling! The massive, the inscrutable face struck the soft ground, and the weight of the stone carried it far below the surface. The solid rock, weakened by the fires which had swept the cornfield, was splintered into half a dozen pieces. What had been the most unflawed specimen of Mayan art that the expedition was likely to find was one more pile of ruins.

Of his sensations as his unique discovery smashed to destruction, he did not speak to Father Alvarez. In the light of what afterwards occurred one can imagine that his scientific regrets were momentarily obliterated by his personal exaltation. Until now all the initiative and all the honours of the expedition had belonged to Randall. This treasure was Sven's, and Sven's alone. He alone had the sketch of those awe-inspiring features. He alone possessed a portrait, which could never be duplicated, of that forbidding, beautifully ornamented brow under its curling hair of stone.

Although he did not admit this to Father Alvarez he did, oddly, reveal a rather intimate turn of his imagination. He

said that, as the sublime, the terrible face plunged into the earth, he had a momentary flash of something that had happened long ago: not a visual recollection, but something more profound. He seemed to see the blind god Hörder—the Lord of Night they used to tell legends about in his childhood—pitching head first into darkness, into the earthiness of the grave. He had slain Balder, the Lord of Light.

If Father Alvarez felt the momentary recoil of a perfectly sane person confronted by something abnormal, the distaste of the orthodox for the occult, he did not show it. He merely led the conversation into generalities. It was interesting, he said, how similar superstitions prevailed in countries separated from each other by oceans and continents. Sun worship and sun chariots and the sign of the swastika were to be traced not only in the forests of Sweden but almost everywhere among savage people. The same bloody rites that had been described by the Hebrew prophets had been practised in Babylonia, India, Egypt, South America, and Scandinavia.

He went on to remark how the werewolf of Europe is the same as the *nagual* of Guatemala and Honduras. The good priest deplored the fact that many of the Indians in Guatemala still believe that certain men can externalize their secret desire into the form of a *nagual*, which may be a bird or a beast, and that their own fate depends upon that of their *nagual*. If a man's *nagual* is wounded, the man bleeds and suffers. The aborigines still believe the legend that, in the battle between the natives and the Spaniards on the plateau of Quetzaltenango, Pedro de Alvarado killed with his lance a great green-plumaged bird, and at that moment the Indian chief fell dead.

Sven agreed, but so absently that Father Alvarez realized

that, if his listener was not impressed by this dissertation on lycanthropy, it was because he already knew a good deal more about these matters than the priest himself. It was at this time that it occurred to him that Sven had certain qualifications which, properly encouraged, might carry him far in ethnology. Diplomatically the priest brought the conversation from the unprofitable and possibly unhealthy paths of mythology to more practical matters. He congratulated Sven on his discovery and his quickness in realizing its importance. He was, by now, definitely convinced that the Swede had joined the expedition in a final effort to rehabilitate himself, and, at this point in a psychological rebirth, a lucky turn such as today's might mean the beginning of genuine success.

Sven, too proud to acknowledge encouragement, nevertheless accepted it; although, characteristically, he began to deprecate the importance of his discovery.

"It's nothing tremendous—there are hundreds of Maya stelæ in Guatemala. This was exceptionally handsome and exceptionally undefaced. That, and the fact that I have the only drawings of it in its original state, give it value. Even if, at some future time, the stela should be jacked up and set in place, which, although possible, would be a difficult and expensive undertaking, it would be either a ruin or a restoration. So, as you say, I have perhaps made a beginning—a beginning. . . ." And his face seemed to be lightened of some 'of its dark trouble.

Just at this point the two were interrupted by the sound of Randall coming down the trail.

"Hello there!" he was shouting. "Sven! I say, Sven!" And then, bursting into the clearing and seeing the priest: "Hello there, Father Alvarez! Glad to see you!"

Randall's yellow hair was black with sweat, his face streaked with dirt, but his voice was fresh as dawn. The three *mozos* who had accompanied him put down their burdens without comment. They had been carrying both the large and the small cameras, the surveying instruments, and the material for making paper squeezes.

"Let me go and get rid of these confounded ticks that are eating me up," he exclaimed as he shook hands with Father Alvarez. "Then I'll come back and tell you two what I stumbled on, early this morning. A most magnificent stela—in perfect condition—in a burned-over cornfield so that it was possible to photograph it on all sides. I made rubbings and paper squeezes, took all the measurements, which was lucky, because just now, when I came back that way—guess what had happened."

"Yes, yes, we know—it had fallen," replied Father Alvarez mechanically, looking not at Randall but at Sven.

The Swede's face was ghastly, and in his eyes blazed such demoniac rage that the priest instinctively put out a protective hand. But Sven made no movement. When he spoke it was in his accustomed repressed voice.

"You are lucky, as usual, Randall Franklin," he said. And, turning, he went to his tent.

There is no one living who can give a connected report of the next act of this tragedy, no one except Sven Thorvaldsen, who will never again speak of Guatemala. We can only infer, from what we positively know occurred a little later, that the next few hours, during which Sven did not leave his tent, rolled up about his tormented soul like smoke from a fire of evil odour.

In order to comprehend the intensity of his torment we must remember that he was not absolutely normal, that probably his defeats and frustrations had come from a twist in his emotions and imagination. He had envied Randall Franklin from the moment of their meeting: envied his charm, his health, and all the easy circumstances of assurance which had surrounded him from his birth. Although he had thrust this envy out of sight, down into the secret depths of his subconsciousness, it had kept on expanding until it had thrust the malignant tentacles throughout his entire being. Now, with this final triumph of Randall—a triumph which automatically cancelled Sven's lesser one—that hidden rancour flamed into dreadful hate.

Randall, who had so much, who had everything, was to grasp still another prize. Once more he was to be offered the wine of success and Sven the ashes of defeat. As Sven sat in his tent, he must have visualized Randall sleeping near by in his, lying relaxed in healthy oblivion.

Near him would be his camera and in it the films which were tangible witness to his luck and energy, his notebooks with the measurements which bore testimony to his scientific accuracy, and the paper squeezes and rubbings he had been clever and quick enough to make. They would be close together—these things; so close that, if a tree or a boulder should fall through the tent in a certain way, they would all be destroyed, or certainly so mangled that they would be of no more value than—perhaps not as much as—Sven's own drawing. But it was not easy to see how any heavy weight could fall in exactly that way. Perhaps, if a bucket of water could be overturned, or if an animal—if one of those clumsy dantas which were occasionally seen in this vicinity—should

blunder against the tent and blunder off again. . . . As a matter of fact, it could easily enter since Randall never fastened any netting across the front opening as Sven always carefully did, but trusted entirely to the curtain over his cot. Oh, it would be easy enough for anyone—anything—to get at the stuff. But how explain one's presence there? If he, Sven, merely through the intensity of his desire, could lift the film holders, the notebook, the squeezes, and spirit them away—out of sight—out of reach—out of existence—for ever . . .

To understand what subsequently happened it is necessary to remember that Sven, despite the wickedness of his imaginations, was in action a man of integrity. It would be impossible for him deliberately to commit a deed of overt or covert violence. It did not occur to him to leave his tent and creep into the next one and either injure or steal his rival's property. Father Alvarez, whose hammock was slung in such a position that he was a spectator of the entire scene during this period, testifies that Sven never did leave his tent.

Father Alvarez not only *could* see the tents but *did* see them: Randall's with its front flap open to the night, and Sven's closely curtained by netting. And Father Alvarez saw something else, something he afterwards described truthfully, but only in part, for Father Alvarez is a good Catholic and does not believe in pagan superstitions.

It was the darkest moment of the night and there was a sense of oppression in the air as before a storm. Just when this horrid breathlessness had focused into a sort of core, the side flap of Sven Thorvaldsen's tent was stealthily lifted and Something crept out—Something smaller than a man—Something on all fours. It ran across the open space with that noiselessness which sinks into darkness as black water sinks into

black water—the incredible noiselessness of a wild animal—and darted through the front of Randall's tent.

Father Alvarez leaped from his hammock.

Although he was overcome with a stench of horror, he managed to pull himself together and start running. But quick as he was, Randall had been quicker. There was the whirl of a blow, the scream of a wounded animal, and a streak of soundless blackness fled out of Randall's door, across the open space, and, flattening itself out weasel-like, disappeared under the flap of Sven's tent.

Father Alvarez stood for a moment feeling very sick.

Then he heard Randall's cheerful shout. "Sorry to have frightened you fellows. Some damn thing was nosing about in here and I slashed it with my machete—right through the ear. It won't be back in a hurry."

Father Alvarez called some reassuring answer. He did not, however, return to his hammock. Instead he hurried over to Sven's tent.

The moon had come out and it was possible to see the whole interior. Sven was sitting upon his camp stool precisely as he had been sitting for the last two hours. The side flaps were securely pegged down, the mosquito netting across the front opening closely fastened. It would have been impossible for a man to have got out or into that tent without disturbing the pegs or the net, and impossible for them to have been re-adjusted in the few seconds that had elapsed since the disturbance.

Father Alvarez was sure of this and insisted upon it later when people began to whisper about the events of that night. Furthermore, he said he had seen the animal with his own eyes and that it was about the size of a dog. It is not for a

layman to question the word of a priest, but it must be admitted that, even if Father Alvarez told the truth about what he saw, he did not tell the whole truth.

That remained for two *mozos*.

These two, startled by the noise, had run first to Randall's tent and, peering in, had seen him picking up his camera and notebook, which had been knocked into a heap on the floor, and making sure the squeezes were not damaged. Then they crept over to Sven's tent and, finding an aperture around one of the rope holes, peered in through that.

They saw Father Alvarez come in and go up to Sven, who was sitting rigid upon his camp stool like a man in a cataleptic trance. He looked at Father Alvarez blankly, as if he did not recognize him. This much the priest related to Randall after Sven's subsequent disappearance. What he did not mention to anyone, then or ever, and which was only later pieced together from Indian whispers, was that Sven's face was horribly white and that from a wound in his ear blood was trickling.

A certain forest clearing in Guatemala is dark—dark as the crypt of a cathedral. Pagan site and Christian sanctuary are alike in their obscurity.

Good Father Alvarez, having returned to his parish and his church, kneels before the altar. It is possible he prays for the soul of Sven. It is possible that there falls across his prayers the troubled remembrance of the shadows in the jungle and the shadows in the human heart.

Two Indians, kneeling on the stone floor of the church, fasten their eyes respectfully upon the cassocked back of the priest and upon the crucifix above him. In their simplicity

they believe that the plaster image of the Saviour is God Himself. They also think that where the walls of Mayan temples mark a broken labyrinth through the gloom other gods still linger: gods of darkness as well as gods of light. Even as the heathen in ancient Scandinavia thought that Hördér, the Lord of Night, slew Balder, the Lord of the Sun.

The Indians believe in Jesus, who is the Son of the Blessed Virgin, and in Yum Kaax, who is Lord of the Harvest.

They also believe in *naguals*.



ON THE RIO DULCE



BETWEEN Livingston and the Golfete Dulce the Río Dulce has sliced itself a channel whose sides rear upward without a break for several hundred feet. The stratification and whiteness of this rocky chasm—so sharply severed—and the narrowness of the passage make these walls seem artificial. However, their sternness is softened by a drapery woven in a hundred textures and tones of rippling, living greenery, and it is terminated by a downward sweep which is as graceful as the swoop of a bird.

The waterway widens; the perpendicular cliffs contract

into rolling hills, flatten into banana plantations, and, where a small bayou slips into the river, man ventures again to impress his signature upon the scene. At the intersection of the river and the bayou is a primitive platform, built of unbarked tree trunks so that it is hardly distinguishable on that tree-crowded shore.

Perhaps we would not be able to see it at all, even while staring at the very spot, if at this moment a figure did not part the branches, softly as a woman parting silken curtains, and step out into the dappled sunlight of the landing.

The figure is that of an Indian, short, muscular, bent forward under a burden carried upon his shoulders. With a twist he divests himself of this weight and places it with extreme gentleness upon the platform, covering it with a great green leaf as one might deposit and cover a sleeping child.

The Indian is in what were once white trousers and a white shirt, which at this distance make a splash of light against the heavy verdancy of the background. His black hair, his brown hands and feet, accent the outline. He stands immobile as an image, his face turned towards the north. He is waiting for something.

The Río Dulce, rising in the central highlands of Guatemala and emptying into the Gulf of Honduras, is a natural artery for traffic and travel. Long before the white man had dropped his sails upon the shores of the Americas, the Indians in *cayugas* paddled up and down this waterway and built their huts upon the shores of the lake we call Izabal. This fluid highway, this wash of pastel tints, is more immutable than the rocky cliffs it severs. This water, warm and soft as air, carves a way through stone. To the Río Dulce man is no more than a leaf floating upon its moving surface. To

Guatemala man is less than a leaf. Her jungles, for ever decaying, for ever renewing; her icy mountains which breathe volcanic fire; her deserts which bear the cactus; her lakes which have never been plumbed; her rivers which with current and waterfall defy navigation—these have protected her so far from the levelling processes of exploitation. Guatemala is still more powerful than the human beings who essay to penetrate her waterways, who fell the fringe of her forests, who hang their scraps of gardens upon her mountain slopes.

The history of Guatemala is the history of the country, not of her handful of inhabitants. It is the history of volcanic eruptions, of floods which gushed from the sides of mountains and swallowed cities, of the voracity of tropical growth which rends and devours all human handiwork. The Indians, who can maintain themselves in the humidity of the lowlands and in the frigidity of the highlands, survive. They survive because they are pores in the breathing skin of the country which wraps the sleety mists of volcanoes around its head and thrusts its feet into the tepid water seeping through mangrove roots.

The Indian who slipped through the forest growth to the platform at the intersection of bayou and river was generated by the same lush heat that generated the stem of heavy fruit he has carried to the water's edge.

As he stands, fixedly scanning the river, which is the only highway that he knows, a *cayuga* paddled by half-naked natives passes so swiftly that it scarcely ruffles the water's surface. The Indian notes it merely as he would note the skimming flight of a wild duck or the flash of the skipping garfish. The *cayuga* dissolves into the horizon. It has no more import than

a bird or fish or a fleck of cloud. Its shadow, like theirs, has been caught in the mirror of the Río Dulce and released by it through unnumbered ages. Like the bird, the fish, and the cloud it will flit through the sunshine and pass over the water through ages yet to come.

A *cayuga*, even the longest one, is small compared to a ship with deck and canvas such as Córtez sailed across the Gulf of Amatique, through the Golfete Dulce, and up the river to Lake Izabal. At San Felipe the Spaniards built a fort and stretched a chain across the channel to block the pirates and stop enemy Indians. The ship with its pennants rose arrogantly above the Río Dulce. The fort of San Felipe with its cannon dominated the wooded promontory. But that prow is long since sunk below the water. Lizards dart through the crevices of Fort San Felipe; lianas pull its walls to earth; its cannon rust beneath the sun. Guatemala has absorbed the Spaniard.

If the passing *cayuga* means nothing to the waiting Indian, legends of the golden-prowed galleon mean less. The Indian is waiting for quite a different craft than either of these. And now, at length, that craft appears—a motor boat, towing a barge stacked with green bunches of bananas. It chugs methodically onward, not flitting with the noiselessness of the *cayuga*, not dipping with the grace of the sailing ship. It passes by the wooden platform, receives the Indian's stem of bananas, and he receives a token of payment. The barge continues down the river. The Indian slips back into the forest.

Thus there forms and falls one of those infinitesimal drops which swell at last into the flood that washes Guatemala in the bright light of today: a benign flood—a flood of barter and

exchange—a flood of golden wealth more valuable than that which could be drawn from any gold mine. The elusive land which has resisted all coercion yields at last to cajolery. Her abundance overflows and fills the coffers of the white man.



THE BANANA TREE



THE banana tree thrusts its roots into the moist soil. It wraps its trunk in closely folded layers of green. Its leaves, which are as long as a man, move constantly in the breeze, so that almost as soon as they unfurl they are tattered into fringe. Where trunk and branches meet hangs a single blossom of immense size, to become first a fleshy flower and then a spike symmetrically set with a hundred or more finger-like fruits. When these reach a certain size and fullness—although still green—a man with a curved knife on the end of a pole will gash the spongy, stem-like

trunk, so that it will bend over under the weight of the fruit. Then he will be able to cut off the clumsy cluster and carry it away either on his own back or on that of his mule. The parent plant, having borne its unique harvest, is felled, for it will not fructify again. A tree which took twelve months to mature is slashed down for a single yield. It lies where it has fallen. It rots. It returns to the soil from which it sprang. Around its stump young shoots appear. New trees thrust their roots into the ground. They wrap their slender height in folds of green. They wave their immense succulent leaves in the air. They increase and multiply. The reproductive force is irresistible—prolific past belief. As far as boat can paddle or eye can reach, decay is tearing down all vegetative life and the very air is generating it anew. How should man, an image of earth, whose corruptible flesh has not yet put on the incorruptible, think to escape from the body of this death?



THE MACHETE



A MACHETE, a foot or more in length, is carried in the hand of every Indian man and boy. He uses it to cut his way through the bush, to slash open a coconut, to stir the earth around his cornhills, to thatch a roof or shear a sheep or spear his food from the common kettle. He trims his toenails and fingernails very neatly with it. It is, obviously, the final answer in an argument. Each region has its favoured style of machete. In some it is of dagger-like straightness; in some it suggests a curved scimitar. Its blade may be broad or narrow; its handle of bone or wood; its

sheath of metal or leather. But whatever the details the edge is always sharp and the instrument is always near the owner's hand.

It is the tool by which he wins his living from the forest and field. It is the weapon by which he keeps at bay his human and animal enemies and that enemy which is the most unrelenting of them all—the jungle.



JUNGLE CUNNING



THE Indian, constantly swinging his machete, manages to keep clear the immediate space around his hut. Beyond that limited circumference the trees clamber into the air almost as swiftly as the mango of the Oriental fakir. Vines creep up the trunks of these arboreal acrobats, steal out upon the branches, and, when they reach the top, suddenly tighten their coils and strangle their host. They fling themselves into a thousand ramifications and suffocate the struggling limbs. Parasitic plants germinate in crevices of tree and shrub. They multiply, weighing down with deadly

blossom the organism that harbours them. Ferns grow to the size of men—to the size of giants—and then decay. Moss muffles the fallen fronds.

This ravening strife never stops, never lessens. The Indian lives in the vortex of it and maintains his equilibrium. Out of the armies of green he captures a few banana trees and a few cocopalms for food. He lets the rest of them breed and war and bury their murdered dead.

The white man otherwise.

If you would see how he grapples with Guatemala, go to one of those cities he has built in what was recently a solitude of swamp and sky. You will see here chequerboard streets shaded by palm trees planted at regular intervals, neat dwellings with clipped front lawns behind hibiscus hedges, shops, offices, a railway station, steel tracks piercing the primal waste.

For the white man was not content with half a dozen banana trees here and there. He must have phalanxes, regiments, armies of banana trees. He must train them in regular formation. He must retire the old and discipline the new. And he must devise means of handling an immense and perishable booty so that it will escape a bruise, of transporting a frailly exotic prize to the ends of the earth.

In order to do this he has laid thousands of miles of railway, dredged swamps, and blasted tunnels. He has built specially constructed vessels into which the delicate stems are softly lifted and stowed in holds where the temperature is cooled or heated to preserve their precisely proper ripening.

These railroads, these steamships, these hundreds of square miles of plantations, demand men: managers, accountants, agriculturists, engineers, mechanics, clerks, labourers. They

must not only be assigned employment and wages, but, since they must live upon the scene of their labours, they must be provided with houses for themselves, schools for their children, transportation, recreation, medical aid. Obviously this necessitates more than swinging a machete to clear an immediate breathing-space. It implies sewers, screens, incinerators, refrigerating plants, houses ventilated and built on piles, underbrush kept clear, grass kept short, paint, cleanliness everywhere. The towns which have been built to serve the banana trade are modern urban microcosms, set squarely down amid primitive nature.

The jungle has been beaten back. It has retreated so far that one may follow a routine of sleeping in a comfortable verandaed house, working in an office cooled by electric fans and furnished with steel filing cases and glass-topped desks, and relaxing in the tiled swimming-pool at the club with hardly a glance towards the ominous circle of darkness which lies in a ring of heat between the settlement and distant civilization. Like a small neat animal whose defence is in its cunning, the town works and plays, sleeps and eats, within its circumscribed area. It grows oblivious to the huge beast which has been driven away but never tamed or trammelled and which curls itself around the horizon, watching, waiting. It will not creep down upon those park-like streets; it will not pounce upon those great buildings of corrugated tin which house locomotives and ice plants and carpenter shops. It will not whip out a paw and snatch a man from his bed or his bath. But the jungle has its own cunning.

Sometimes at noon its hot breath gusts upon the pale-faced intruder when he least expects it, and he breaks into a sweat which is not healthy. Sometimes at night he is dimly conscious

of a throbbing like the barely audible purr of a great animal. The white man stirs in his bed and sighs, and his rest is troubled.

This is the story of what the jungle did to Herbert Davis.



A CITY RINGED WITH FIRE



HE was a bachelor of twenty-nine with a tall build that seemed a little old-maidish, and with rather nicely cut regular features. His father was a Baptist minister in the Middle West, where Herbert had attended the state university, majoring in commerce and accounting. Although he had lived in the tropics for three years, he made no concession to indolence and still walked with quick prissy steps and fussed over his books like a school teacher. He was always immaculate in white, and Lee Markley, the district manager, valued him highly as confidential clerk and assistant.

This much everyone knew.

Not everyone, but several, also knew something about Herbert before he realized it himself—when it would have shocked him if he had even suspected it. They knew that he had fallen in love with his employer's wife.

Geno Markley, seven or eight years older than Herbert, was a charming, friendly woman, mother confessor and hostess to the community. She treated the young clerk, who had only recently been brought to Guatemala from Honduras, as she did all the young men in the company, asking him to dinner occasionally and frequently to bridge, since he and the Markleys were excellent players. If she was aware of his feeling for her, she never betrayed it. Most of the bachelors had fallen in love with her at some time or other, and she had always been wise enough to direct their emotions into safer channels and good enough to prefer the less exciting relationship of friendliness to flirtation. This, too, everyone knew. It was one of the many reasons why the women, as well as the men, trusted and liked her.

This was the situation when Lee Markley invited Herbert to join them on a week-end cruise up the Río Dulce. The Markleys were entertaining an official from the New York office, and Herbert's discretion and his game of bridge made him the natural choice to complete the little party. Geno doubtless felt she could manage the situation. She knew her husband; she knew Herbert; she knew herself. There was, however, one factor she neglected to take into consideration. She had lived so long and so securely in the compact little city, which was protected by oil-filmed ditches, screened doors and windows, filtered water, and lighted streets, that she had quite forgotten that there are tropic diseases more in-

sidious than those borne by mosquitoes, more violent than fire or flood. She had forgotten the jungle.

The yacht with its scoured deck and brightly cushioned chairs, its galley and ice box and cabins, chugged across the Gulf of Amatique. Water and sky were lambent in the pearliness of dawn—the ineffable dawn of the tropics, when every sight and sound, when every stirring breeze, caresses the senses and stirs the imagination to a bliss that is almost pain.

At this hour man is cleansed of all the sadness, all the soil, that has accrued to him through the years-long journey of his life. The heaviness which has sifted upon him through the age-old evolution of the race is washed away. His emotions are clarified; his perceptions become sensitive.

Lee Markley and his guest settled down in steamer chairs on the afterdeck to smoke. Geno and Herbert found themselves side by side on cushions on the roof of the forward deck. The east was just beginning to lighten when they left Puerto Barrios, and it was dawn when they pulled away from Livingston. The opalescent freshness of early morning still shimmered in the air as the yacht slipped under the coco-palms that overhang the point where the wide expanse of the bay narrows into the privacy of the river.

As if yielding to the ethereal hush the yacht lessened speed, and very gently began its penetration of the channel. Gradually on either side the banks grew higher; they swelled into hills; they reared and stiffened into cliffs—white, sheer, and evenly stratified. Trees thrust themselves out from these perpendicular escarpments. Ferns rose fountain-like and fountain-like dropped towards earth. Over this living curtain, woven of every texture and shade of green, hung lianas, like tinsel dripping from a Christmas tree.

Herbert and Geno sat without speaking as they were drawn through this winding corridor. Its grandeur silenced them. The tender verdure that rippled against its unscalable ramparts did not deceive them. They were confined, in psychic intimacy, in an abyss.

The cliffs diminished: one folded back into another. The rift of sky widened smilingly and the clouds were puffed with golden light. And Herbert could have wept, he knew not why. He could have lain his head upon Geno's breast and wept.

The palisades peaked up again, and the river clove its way between them. The yacht proceeded steadily. Gradually the awful formidableness of rock lessened into wooded hills, marked by an occasional trail. They opened to make room for a handful of huts and a landing-platform. Nature was no longer absolute: man was asserting his presence.

Lee Markley and his guest came up to join the others, and human voices broke the stillness of the air, human images were reflected in the glassy water. But although man has reclaimed an edge of the river bank, has drained a marsh here and widened a bayou there, in Guatemala Nature still holds domain.

"Once every little while," Markley told his visitor, "someone steps off the trail, either inadvertently or deliberately, and is lost for ever."

He recounted the story of two botanists who had recently stopped their automobile under the railway bridge near Puerto Barrios and left the road to gather some specimens. For three days and nights they wandered, completely confused, although they were so near civilization that they could hear trains passing, and they were rescued by a mere—a miraculous—chance. Geno recalled a little group of boys

who had left the club one Sunday afternoon for a stroll and, less fortunate than the botanists, had never been seen again.

"A man is merely a crumb," added her husband. "The jungle can make a meal of a fortress and everything in it and not be glutted," and he pointed to the wooded promontory where Fort San Felipe had once stood, bristling with cannon and manned by Spaniards as brave and hardy as lions. "You can hardly distinguish the walls. The jungle lusts for blood and in the end it always wins."

The freshness of the morning had been burned away by the noonday sun. The earth seemed swooning beneath the passionate pressure of heat. Herbert's blood was pounding thickly in his ears; blood was throbbing in his veins.

They made a cursory exploration of the fort, and ate their luncheon in the shadow of its toppled walls. Herbert found himself watching Geno as she strolled along the beach, the breeze blowing her garments, moulding them to her breast, whipping them about her moving limbs.

At last he realized, without equivocation, what had happened to him.

Of the rest of that day and the two succeeding ones the visitor from New York retained only the most agreeable recollections. The river was so tranquil, he said, it seemed as if he were floating over and not on it. The temperature was so beguiling, he said, that he felt as if he were breathing perfume instead of air. The visitor from New York was not conscious of dark savagery ringing this enchanted orbit around. . . .

It was on the last day, just before they returned to Puerto Barrios, that they detoured into the Graciosa River, where

the black water is as motionless as the sky it reflects. Here mangrove trees hang over the swampy edge, their bleached roots exposed as they arch themselves, writhe, and fling their tentacles into the water. As in the pellucid night of a Claude Lorrain mirror, the dark river reflected their darker shadows, their shining leaves, their naked, snake-like roots.

Herbert gazed at them in horror—in despair. . . .

It was unfortunate that Lee Markley decided to stay over in Puerto Barrios and see his guest off on the boat the following night, and asked Herbert to accompany Mrs. Markley home.

A train trip of several hours through the obscurity of night, through the nightmare of trees that press close, is like the flight of a blind projectile, violent and yet volitionless, hurled through space. Herbert sat beside Geno without speaking. Although it had grown cool, there were beads of sweat on his forehead.

The light of the train burrowed through the murkiness. It distorted the shapes of the trees that flew past, so that they became fiends cloaked in sable, racing on the wind. It flashed a white light on the cactus so that their fleshy leaves became ghastr spectres. The odour of decay hung in the air.

Herbert helped his employer's wife out of the railway coach and walked beside her the few blocks to the Markley house. The sidewalk was as straight as the trees it bordered and was illumined by electric lights. They were back in the security of the little city which man had made and trustfully set down within striking distance of the lustful wilderness.

They came to the Markley house, a dusky bulk, commodious, hospitable, safe. There was no one awake: no light, no

movement anywhere. Geno thanked him for his escort and put out her hand to say good-night.

And then that which had ringed the city in a circle of fire, which had been waiting, beaten back but never tamed, leaped and sprang. . . .

Someone saw Herbert Davis as he rushed down the street and leaped across the steel tracks glittering in the first rays of dawn. He disappeared. Blackness swallowed him up. The jungle claimed him.



THE COFFEE TREE



GLOSSY and neat the coffee plant, no higher than a huckleberry bush, displays its pristine berries. It has known only three cycles of spring and it has already borne white flowers, sweet-smelling and quickly fading. Now, like an eager little girl who has, for the first time, formed all the letters of her name, it surveys this accomplishment with surprised satisfaction.

The shrub may live for twenty, perhaps for thirty, years, growing taller than a tall man. By that time blossom and berry will be a familiar freight upon its dainty limbs. The

touch of the spade around its roots, of human fingers parting its foliage, will take their accustomed place in its annual cycle. But this first crop? The young parent examines it anxiously. There are only a few berries, to be sure, but they are as big, as bright, as those borne by the grown-up trees. The little plant is pleased. It dedicates itself with good will and industry to the business of production.

It was the white man who brought the coffee tree to the New World from Arabia, Liberia, and Ethiopia. It was he who worked out the best methods of propagation and cultivation, who discovered the most advantageous altitude to be not in the lowlands, not in the highlands, but on the tropical mountain slope a thousand feet to five thousand feet above the sea. It was he who learned to protect his *cafetales* by planting in them larger trees whose leaves would make a shade and hold a damp blanket between the coffee and the sun. The white man has built cement terraces on which the berries are spread to dry. He has installed machinery to strip the pulp from the seeds and separate the silvery parchment from the beans. The white owner, or his deputy, lives in a great comfortable house and oversees his estate very much as the southern planter in the United States lived upon his thousand acres before the Civil War. When the crop is good, the Guatemalan planter can take himself and his whole family to Paris for half a year. Nor is the planter the only white man who profits by a good crop. The railroad officials, the exporters, the steamship owners—to say nothing of the merchants, wholesale and retail, from San Francisco to Vienna—all profit. The breakfast tables of the world salute the little tree.

To all of these coffee is a mere commodity. It is a crop, a merchandise, a beverage. But to the Indian who tends the

cafetales, who lifts the crop, who dries the berries, who pulps, hulls, sorts, and sacks the beans, coffee is a personalized actuality. The pretty tree blossoming, fruiting, demanding water, demanding pruning, is a tyrant who exacts from him his life and labour, and contemptuously permits him in return the right to exist upon her dedicated domain.

The Indian who lives upon a coffee *finca*, as the plantation is called in Guatemala, bears only a sorrowful resemblance to the gleaming specimen paddling his *cayuga* down the Río Dulce or to the brilliantly costumed freeman tending his own cornfield in the highlands.

The *colono* has discarded the garments woven upon his hand loom in multi-coloured stripes and checks, fringed, knotted, tied, and embroidered by his fingers with flowers and birds; he has exchanged them for the slovenly shirt and trousers of the white man; his ornamented sandals for shoddy shoes; his folded tasselled headdress for a hat bought at a shop. No longer does he take pride in that sartorial splendour which makes brilliant the mountain region in Guatemala. His women no longer carry water from the common *pila* in the outdoor kitchens in the graceful earthen vessels shaped upon the potter's wheel, but in tins which brought gasoline from the United States.

This Indian lives in a one-room cabin built and owned by the *finca*. He buys his necessities at the *finca* shop. There is a church on the grounds to which a priest comes for three days a year and to this the *colono* may go if he chooses. There is a school taught by a *ladino*—one in whom mingle Indian and Spanish blood—and to this his children must go, whether they choose or not. There is a jail, also, for *colonos* who are dis-

orderly, and the overseer has a few simple remedies for those who are sick.

The cabin of the *colono* does not belong to him. His tools do not belong to him but must be turned in and accounted for on Saturday night. And all too often his wages do not belong to him, since he is usually in debt to the store, and his earnings for weeks to come, perhaps for months or even years, are garnisheed. His very body is not his own, since he is forbidden to leave the *finca* as long as he is in debt.

To see a *colono* on a *finca* is to see a prisoner chained to his workbench. He must labour if he would survive, but his labour does not bring him release. His wife is a bondswoman. His children are born into serfdom. Only his machete is his own—his inviolate personal property.

During the season when the crop is lifted hundreds of other Indians pour in to help with the picking, camping out anywhere upon the *finca* grounds. These "casuals" own their cabins and cornfields in outlying regions or in the highlands. They hold a semblance of independence. But it is only a semblance, for many, perhaps most, of them are also in debt to the *finca* shop for loans granted them throughout the year. Their present and their future are mortgaged as inexorably as the wages of the *colono* are garnisheed.

The little coffee tree holds herself erect and shining as the *colono* cultivates about her roots and carefully by hand picks her bright fruit. Even so did Marie Antoinette sit in state while a chamberlain tied her slippers and a barber dressed her hair. Like any queen the coffee tree is quite used to seeing battalions of servants bending to minister to her personal needs; she accepts as a matter of course that labourers should

dig and shovel, haul and hoist, for the general welfare of her realm. She condescends to the officials who oversee her affairs in matters of trade and finance. She acknowledges the armies who protect the transportation and exportation of her wealth. For her part she performs the queenly office for which she was born and bred. She flowers and fruits and produces that which millions covet and only she can supply. She is responsible for four-fifths of the revenue of the country, so that, very properly, her picture is incorporated in the national coat of arms.

To the coffee tree the planter owes his feudal ease in Guatemala and his luxury abroad for half the year. Transport agents and merchants draw handsome incomes from the steady stream of greenish pellets which, stripped of their crimson covering and not yet made fragrant by roasting, fill train and dock and steamship hold with an acrid odour. To the coffee tree the *colono* and the casual owe their scanty existence and to her they pay the tribute of their plumage and their freedom.

Glossy and neat the pretty bush displays her first red berries. With good will and conscientious rectitude she dedicates herself to the primal duty of a sovereign—bringing forth heirs; and to the secondary duty of creating and securing wealth for her realm.



ON THE FINCA



OLD Señora Pérez, having risen from her afternoon siesta, having bathed and scattered a great deal of scented rice powder over her body and a great deal of scented face powder over her cheeks, chin, and neck, allowed Manuela to brush her hair and to drop over her head a fresh afternoon peignoir. Now she came out of her bedroom, which opened upon the second-story *corredor*, and waddled along it until she reached that central part which widened into a veranda and, with easy chairs, tables, a hammock, and ferns in baskets, served as the household living-room.

Señora Pérez settled herself in a chair and laid upon the table at her side the handkerchief and fan which Manuela had put into her hand just as she left the bedroom. Señora Pérez was immensely corpulent. She had been plump at fifty, fat at sixty, and at seventy she was colossal. The white peignoir made no pretence of minimizing the bulk or of fitting it. It billowed from her neck to her heels with nicely ironed ruffles around the wrists. It was cut comfortably low at the throat, where it was finished off with another ruffle. It was an entirely appropriate costume for an old lady who lived upon a Guatemalan coffee *finca* a long day's journey from the nearest city and who never even went to the city any more.

From where she sat Señora Pérez could look out over a courtyard which had once showed patterned cobblestones but was now so overgrown as to be almost a grass plot. Beyond the court she could look a good deal further, down the avenue bordered by the royal palms which had given the *finca* its name, Las Palmas. These feather dusters of the gods were spaced at regular intervals and planted in parallel lines extending for half a mile, flanking superbly an avenue which was, however, today hardly more than a rutted road. Directly behind the royal palms on both sides of the avenue were rows of white-washed, one-room cabins swarming with the naked brown babies of the labourers who lived upon the *finca*.

Señora Pérez could not distinguish the cabins from the veranda any more because the trees and bushes in the front yard had grown so high and so rank. It was a long time since they had been properly pruned. But she did not need to see them to know that they were there, just as they had been on that afternoon forty-five years ago, when, for the first time, she had driven up the avenue to Las Palmas. As she had entered

the grounds with Eduardo, she thought they must be driving through a park, so well kept was the road between the *cafetales*. She had not even known what a *cafetal* was; she had never before seen coffee growing. Until Eduardo told her, she thought the glossy-leaved trees, just a little higher than her head and glittering with red berries, must be some species of holly. They had driven for half an hour between the evenly planted, scrupulously trimmed and tended bushes before they reached the main avenue, and she, looking up, had seen the vine-embowered house with a gallery running the length of the second floor; had seen the house servants in clean aprons and bare feet huddled curiously near the kitchen *pila*; seen, even in that first flashing moment, the cones of the volcanoes that marched across the eastern horizon—and she had loved Las Palmas. She opened her heart to it with the romantic ardour of a young girl. Now she loved it with the emotion of an old woman whose experiences of rapture and desolation for nearly half a century were incorporated in its walls; were buried with Eduardo, her husband, and Lucía, her daughter, in the marbled plot yonder, which was the family cemetery of Las Palmas.

Lucía . . . her thoughts reverted, as they did more and more frequently during those afternoons when she was alone, to a wistful picture of the companion Lucía would be for her now—gay, affectionate Lucía, petting her fat old mother, scolding her because she wouldn't go to bed at reasonable hours, fetching a scarf as the evening grew cooler, and putting it around her mother's shoulders.

Señora Pérez drew two fingers across her forehead—a mannerism of hers when she was thinking deeply. Señora Pérez felt old and lonely. There was something there—inside—that

was not quite right these days. She clapped her hands and called: "Felipe!" She would talk a little to Felipe and forget her loneliness.

Felipe's bare feet came padding down the *corredor*. Felipe's brownish, yellowish face, with its few hairs of moustache dropping at the corners of the mouth like a Chinese mandarin's, smiled at her. His eyes, which slanted a little, narrowed with the smile. Indian, Spanish, and Oriental ancestors had given Felipe his face and his fidelity. In those days when Eduardo had been alive and Las Palmas had been the scene of perpetual house parties, banquets, barbecues, and all the gaieties which make the days and nights fly in a country place so remote that it must create its own entertainment—in those days Felipe had learned to be chief cook, guardian of the wine cellar, head valet, and corporal of that scattering squadron of kitchen maids and serving *mozos* who made up the household staff. Felipe still kept a hand and an eye on all these things as occasion demanded, but his chief concern was to appear promptly when old Señora Pérez clapped her hands and called imperatively: "Felipe!"

"Felipe," asked Señora Pérez, "did Señor Guzmán remember to take the *recuerdo* for Señora Guzmán?"

"Yes, Señora. I myself fastened the saddle bag that held it."

The old lady spoke in Castilian Spanish, the old man in Guatemalan Spanish, but they understood each other perfectly. They also understood that the query was merely an excuse to chat a little about Señora Guzmán. That Felipe could have forgotten such a matter as a remembrance to Señora Guzmán was unthinkable.

"The house seems very quiet after Señor Guzmán goes away," said the old lady.

"Yes, very quiet. But, ah! when they send the children for a visit in the dry season—it will be noisy enough! What a racket we shall have then! What splashings in the swimming-pool! What racings with the ponies! How they will tease my poor monkey and my poor parrot. . . . Four—five? How many children will be here for March and April?"

"Only four this season. Señorita Isabel goes to Paris for six months. But in another year the baby will be old enough to come. We will have to arrange the nursery again."

Señora Pérez's eyes brightened. So did Felipe's. He knew how to make his mistress forget that little pain—there—inside—which was not quite right. He knew how to make her forget, for a few moments, that loneliness which was creeping closer with the years. That loneliness for her own . . . Felipe understood that, too. Enrique Guzmán, as the oldest nephew of Eduardo Pérez, would some day be owner of Las Palmas. In the meanwhile, he was punctilious in visits to his uncle's widow. Every two months he took the three days' horseback ride from his own *finca* near the Salvadorian border to inquire for the old lady's health and to go over the affairs of Las Palmas with Ernst Krimler, the German manager. Every March he and Señora Guzmán made the long journey with children and nurses, and after a week departed leaving the children for the vacation.

Señora Pérez loved the children. She loved Enrique Guzmán and his wife Alicia. But they were Eduardo's kin, not hers. There was a difference. Everyone was affectionate to her and she was grateful for this affection. But as the years accumulated heavily, more and more often she thought of Lucía; more and more often she was conscious of a gnawing, deep within her, which was not the pain of the body.

Felipe, who knew everything about Las Palmas, knew this also. That was why, when old Señora Pérez clapped her hands and spoke his name, his bare feet came padding instantly and his wise old slant eyes narrowed in a smile as he reminded her that Señor Guzmán might be arriving in ten days now, or told her that one of the *vaqueros* was breaking in a pony for little Jacinto Guzmán, who had been too small to ride last year, but now, being three, would be able to gallop anywhere. And Señora Pérez, thinking of the vacation time when the *corredores* would be shaking under running feet and the dining-room would be full of voices and the odours of Felipe's best cooking, would smile and nod and perhaps, unfurling her fan slowly, wave it back and forth with that gesture which Eduardo had so admired and whose grace even the stiffness of age had not destroyed.

This afternoon, as Felipe stood there agreeing that they must soon begin to renovate the nursery, a sound above their heads—above the house—made them both stop short and listen. The sound was not very loud; it was not even unfamiliar, for every day the airplane from Mexico to Guatemala City passed over Las Palmas. But it was five o'clock and the airplane had passed at noon as usual. This must be another—probably a private—plane, and Señora Pérez and Felipe exchanged looks of interrogation. In spite of the sprawling informality of the *finca* with its intimate vocalities, in spite of the creak of ox carts, the clatter of cows and horses being driven from one pasture to another, the murmur of pigeons, the bark of dogs, and—during the season—the clash of machinery from the *beneficio*, where the coffee was being polished, an unaccustomed sound was instantly heard. To be sure, the

bell which sent the *colonos* to the fields and summoned them back again clove the air for miles. The river hissed and rushed incessantly day and night. But one did not pay any attention to the bell because it rang at stated hours. One did not pay any attention to the river because it complained perpetually. But the whir of an airplane at five o'clock was entirely irregular. Even Felipe's resourcefulness was not able to produce an explanation.

However, information of a sort was soon brought in the person of Don Pablo, who came puffing up the steps and pounding down the *corredor*.

"We think there has been an accident. A plane has come down in the east *prado*. Señor Krimler has gone over to see what the matter is. He has taken extra horses and a stretcher. One can never tell."

Don Pablo smiled happily. He was always smiling, even when ashes from the volcanoes began to fall like snow. To be sure, the ashes would kill the coffee, but the crop next year would be enough better to make up the damage.

"Felipe," Señora Pérez turned, "you must see that there is plenty of hot water—sheets—bandages. There may be need of them."

But Felipe had already disappeared. He could not read or write; he had never been farther from Las Palmas than he could go on his bare feet. But in time of emergency he knew what to do. And in time of ennui also.

Don Pablo sat down opposite Señora Pérez and observed cheerfully: "Maybe it was a forced landing. Maybe the plane crashed."

"These airplanes!" exclaimed Señora Pérez indignantly.

"The automobile was bad enough. Thank goodness the roads keep them away from Las Palmas. But the air is free for any crazy creature to cavort in."

Don Pablo agreed.

Don Pablo's costume consisted of shoes varnished to an orange hue, cut like coffins, white trousers with a blue stripe in them, a pink silk shirt with a diamond collar button, and no collar. The face that climaxed this sartorial crescendo was olive in color and egg-shaped in contour.

When Señora Pérez had come to Las Palmas, Don Pablo was the bookkeeper. When that Don Pablo died, his son Don Pablo became bookkeeper. The present one was the third Don Pablo to her knowledge to preside over the ledgers and keep the accounts of the two hundred *colonos* who lived upon the *finca* and the two thousand "casuals" who, although they appeared for work only when the crop was being lifted, turned up frequently during the year to borrow money against their future earnings.

Señora Pérez was devoted to Don Pablo and looked forward to mealtimes when, according to the custom upon all Guatemalan *fincas*, the bookkeeper and the manager took their places at the family table. She had grown even fonder of him since Herr Krimler had been made manager of Las Palmas. Herr Krimler tried to force Prussian discipline upon the *colonos*, who resented it. He tried to force German humour upon his table companions, who resented that. Since Herr Krimler was Señor Guzmán's appointment, Señora Pérez accepted him, but she refused to like him.

Now she heard his guttural accents and looked out to see him coming up the avenue accompanied by a young man in aviator's clothes and a young woman smartly dressed in brown-

ish tweeds. At a respectful distance the *mozos* lagged behind with the unneeded stretcher. Whatever the reason for the landing, there had certainly been no disaster. However, Herr Krimler waved a hand in reassurance.

"Nuddings to vorry you," he called in execrable English. "It vass nuddings. Only the storm which approaches."

The three came up the steps and Señora Pérez rose to greet them.

"I'm sorry we had to come down in your meadow, Señora," explained the pilot in bad but fluent Spanish. "You see, the clouds which have been gathering all afternoon around the volcano heads started to close in on us. I was afraid it would be impossible to go through them and had only a few moments to find a landing-place. I saw your green field and took a chance. I don't think we've done it any damage."

"I don't believe we've hurt the field, but we must apologize for forcing ourselves upon your hospitality," said the young woman, who seemed in perfect possession of herself, of the entire party, and of the Spanish language.

Señora Pérez held out her hand.

"You are very welcome," she told them in English. "I am overjoyed you are not injured. You are Americans, are you not?"

"Yes," the young woman smiled. "I suppose my Spanish reveals that. This is my pilot, Mr. Rossman. And may I introduce myself? I am Roberta Ingraham of Boston."

The storm, whose threatening clouds had counselled Mr. Rossman to land in Señora Pérez's meadow, broke and cleared before the nine-o'clock dinner hour, so there was plenty of time for the travellers to rest and change. Herr Krimler had

constituted himself host to the pilot and brought him to the veranda where the household usually congregated before mealtimes fresh and fit in a white suit and with the straightforward manners of an American youth who is not abashed to be the paid pilot of one wealthy woman and the dinner guest of another.

Miss Ingraham, who had been incredibly neat when she mounted the steps, might, when she appeared for dinner, have been fashioned, glazed, and baked in expensive enamel. Her travelling-case, which had been brought from the plane, had evidently contained every necessity. Her taffy-coloured hair, which she wore parted in the middle and drawn over her ears into a knot at her neck, could not have been smoother if it had been painted upon her head. Her skin, which was pale to transparency, was without a line or blemish. Her teeth were perfection; her figure neat; her hands and feet slender. She was, Señora Pérez decided, a very superior woman without a shred of charm.

Felipe had seen to it that the marble-topped washstand in the guest-room had been piled with towels and cans of hot water. Linen sheets three yards long and embroidered with the Pérez crest were stretched upon the bed which would have accommodated a family. The carved wardrobe had offered shelves and hooks without number. Manuela had been stationed near to offer her services, but Miss Ingraham had not required them. She had unpacked her travelling-case, shaken out a black evening frock, and, although the only light in the thirty-foot bedroom had been one electric bulb suspended from the exact centre of the panelled wooden ceiling, had managed to perform a faultless toilet.

Felipe had not finished his hospitable ministrations when he had overseen the maids who had laid out the linen, wiped up the tiled bedroom floor, and jammed an armful of tuberoses into a vase. He had been busy in the kitchen, storehouse, and dining-room. Champagne, red and white wine, and liqueurs; asparagus soup; lobster caught in the river that morning, fried chicken, truffles, ham—the dishes followed each other in stately procession passed by Felipe and two *mozos*. Señora Pérez always did herself well, but it must be admitted that special honours were being paid to the lady from Boston who accepted them calmly as one accustomed to the best.

Herr Krimler and Mr. Rossman discussed the plane, the route, the weather. Miss Ingraham asked her hostess such intelligent questions about the present coffee market, the education of the children of the *colonos*, legislation in Guatemala concerning miscegenation, that Señora Pérez quite envied Don Pablo, who, speaking no English, was unable to join in the conversation and could devote himself unreservedly to food and drink. He had changed his pink silk shirt for a green and had added a collar and a purple necktie in honour of the guests. From time to time he nodded happily at everyone in general to indicate that he, too, offered the welcome of Las Palmas.

"You speak English perfectly," Señora Pérez heard Miss Ingraham saying. "Did you go to school in England?"

"No, but I have been in England many times. When my husband was alive, we used to spend six months out of every year in Europe—at least of those years when the crop was good. And delightful times we had forty—thirty—even twenty years ago. Since his death I have hardly gone anywhere—not even

to Guatemala City—not even down the steps for the past twelve months. But my nieces and nephews come to me, so I am not deserted.”

She would not let this self-contained young woman guess how lonely she often was—how lonely she had been that very afternoon—longing for a companion—for one of her own flesh and blood.

“Yes, with the airplane there is no such thing as isolation any more,” Miss Ingraham made conversation smoothly. “I left Boston only four days ago and, if everything had been on schedule, I would have been in Panama tomorrow—not that I regret a delay which has been such a pleasure.”

“I shall be sorry to have you go,” returned Señora Pérez politely. “Perhaps I can persuade you to stay over for a few days and see how Guatemalans live on a coffee *finca*?”

“I wish I might. I think, Mr. Rossman, we will not take off at our usual hour tomorrow. Let us start at ten, please, instead of six.” And as the young man nodded an assent, she again turned to her hostess. “I really cannot bear to go until I have seen a little more of this fascinating place.”

“I am glad you like it, although I am sure you must find it quite shabby and out of fashion. Felipe and I are both growing old and old people are careless. It doesn’t look like your marvellously kept places along the North Shore and Cape Cod—you see I have been to New England also.”

“Oh, I like the look of ease and use. I love that tropical tangle in the front yard. And I adore the volcanoes against the sky.”

“Yes, for a little while perhaps,” Señora Pérez told her with a smile. “Shall we go out and have our coffee on the veranda?”

It was midnight and Roberta Ingraham was asleep in the vast four-poster, her travelling clock in its morocco case ticking on the stand beside her, just as if it had not been lifted up into the sky, carried over lakes and jungles and volcanoes, and brought unexpectedly to rest in a Guatemalan bedroom. Both the door and the long window, which, like all the windows, had shutters but no glass, opened sociably upon the *corredor*, which was traversed every few moments by Manuela, Felipe, house *mozos*, or Señora Pérez.

Those unfamiliar with domestic arrangements in the tropics sometimes feel embarrassed by their lack of privacy. But Roberta Ingraham never permitted herself to be disturbed by what could not be remedied. She slept without moving, locked away from intrusion by a reserve which suffered no softening even in sleep, barricaded by a glaze more impervious than any glass.

Miss Ingraham was asleep but Señora Pérez was not.

She was still upon the west veranda in her usual chair, the coolness of the tropic night upon her cheeks, the velvet of the tropic sky above her head. The air was filled with the gentle whir of crickets and the unceasing monotone of the river. The stars were brilliant. Every now and then a flurry of small pale moths swirled by like the petals of flowers.

Señora Pérez was not thinking of these things. Her entire consciousness had reverted to another veranda—a veranda which, like this, was part of a second-story *corredor* which ran the length of a long, narrow house. Only they called a *corredor* a gallery in Virginia.

She had not seen the house in which she had been born and where she had spent her happy childhood since she had

left it the year she was sixteen. But she remembered it clearly—clearly.

The house in Virginia was long, like Las Palmas, and from the west gallery one could see the white-washed cabins of the Negroes, just as, from the west *corredor* of Las Palmas one could see the white-washed *cabañas* of the *colonos*. But it was not only the architectural similarity which related her to so widely separated homes. As a matter of fact, the differences were perhaps greater than the resemblances. The slim slanting trunks of cocopalms are pencilled with totally different lines than the thick bulk of magnolias; the procession of volcanic cones that mark a purple graph against the Guatemalan sky are quite unlike the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. No, the likeness was deeper than what could be accounted for by mere topography or architecture. It was the generous manner of living, the spacious self-containment, of the Virginian plantation and the Guatemalan *finca* that gave them their kinship. Both of them supported a small group of white people who never questioned their aristocracy or their authority and an immense group of coloured dependants who took it for granted that those in the "big house" would supply their shelter and their food, their tools and their necessities. It was this fundamental economic likeness, this similarity of human relationships, that had made the *finca* of Eduardo Pérez seem so gratefully like home to the young Virginia woman who became its mistress.

Yes, she had been fortunate. She had been fortunate in her childhood, in her maturity. One is fortunate if in seventy years of life only five have been unhappy. The old lady sitting in the shadows drew two fingers across her forehead absently. When she was sixteen her parents had sent her North to

school, where she had felt cold, uncomfortable, and excited. Why had they done that? She had never quite understood. Probably they had some notion that Northern schools were better. And why had she, at nineteen, married that correct gentleman fifteen years her senior who had fallen in love with her for her enthusiasms and had spent the five years of their married life trying to repress them?

Oh, the bleak formality of that city house with its Swedish chambermaids who never smiled and its English butler who always disapproved! Oh, the immaculate glitter of that "cottage" where they spent the summers: the gardener who would not let her pick any flowers; those terrible trained nurses who took possession of her and the house when her babies were born! And always her husband, so calm, so just, reasoning with her, improving her, explaining to her why she should be more systematic, arguing without temper that the coloured children in Virginia ought to go to school with the white children. . . . Señora Pérez drew her fingers across her forehead as if to wipe those memories away—for ever and ever.

But she knew there was one memory she could never wipe away. Eduardo Pérez was standing in the shadow of the hedge—that hateful hedge around the edge of the shaven lawn. At the gate in deeper shadow waited the buggy with fast horses. And she—she was leaning over a crib in the nursery. The night light was flickering dimly, but it was bright enough for her to know what she was doing. She picked up her first-born, her Lucy, and wrapped her in a shawl. Then with an anguish which would leave a scar for ever upon her heart, she leaned over and kissed her second daughter good-bye. It was justice to the father that he be left with one child. Justice,

for Robert Ingraham was a just man and the second daughter was his favourite and his namesake. . . .

"Señora!"

It was Felipe.

"Yes, what is it?" She did not turn. She was not startled. Felipe was a shadow that was always beneficent.

"It is one o'clock, Señora."

"Ah, well, I'll go to bed. Give me your arm, Felipe."

Manuela was yawning as she helped her mistress into her nightdress.

But Señora Pérez was not sleepy. Her heart, her mind, even her old flesh, were in turmoil. It was not the wild turmoil of youth, for time had tempered her precipitancies. But she felt broken into fragments—each fragment a throbbing particle.

In the room next hers lay her daughter—Robert's daughter. Forty-seven she must be, but no one would believe it. She carried her years incredibly. So had her father. Robert had been forty when she left him, and his sandy locks had been like this girl's, without one white hair, his pale skin like hers, without a line. They were very like—the two. The same wiry frame, neat hands and feet; the same oblong face, the same cool temperate reasonableness. She must be rich. Eduardo had told her when Robert had died that he had left the Ingraham millions to his only daughter. Rich and carefully educated; well travelled and beautifully mannered. Señora Pérez thought: "Why shouldn't she be like Robert? He moulded her. If she had lived here at Las Palmas, she would have been flexible and gracious like Lucía."

On Señora Pérez's cheeks lay tears. Lucía and Roberta—both lost to her.

It was light before the sun had risen, but as soon as her window glimmered into visibility Señora Pérez found a wrapper and lumbered with surprising quietness out upon the *corredor*.

She did not take her usual chair, but passed through the *sala* to the east veranda, which extended, like the one on the west, the length of the house. From the west—or front—one looked out over the avenue of palms and rows of white-washed *cabañas*. From the east—or rear—one looked out over the roofs of the coffee *beneficio*, the woodsheds, and various out-buildings to where the volcanoes pointed their perfect cones up into the sky.

Very often Señora Pérez watched the sunrise from here. Old people wake early the world over, but in the tropics all life begins to stir at dawn.

Señora Pérez had not slept at all, but she did not feel tired. On the contrary, she was aware of a quickening, a freshening, making her keener than she had been for a long time. She was—or soon would be—significant, uniquely so, to someone—someone of her own. She was able to give again. She was alive after long obsolescence.

“Señoral!”

It was Felipe with a glass of orange juice. As he passed it to her, the first *finca* bell clanged. It was half-past four.

Señora Pérez drank the orange juice and permitted Felipe to arrange her chair so that she could face the sunrise. Now the increasing light began to run like bands of quicksilver up the slanting sides of the dark cones of the volcanoes to pour a glittering pool between their slopes. It was a sunrise of lavender and silver, pale purple and dark blue.

Times without number Señora Pérez had stood upon the east veranda to watch the dawn. Times without number Eduardo had stood watching it with her. Flaming dawns—opalescent dawns—sunrises that drew delicate veils of mist across the breasts of the volcanoes, that swirled the blue peaks in a foam of cloud. But never before had a sunrise seemed so grave and quiet—so pregnant with promise.

The *finca* began to stir, to become audible, like an orchestra collecting and tuning up its instruments, and she listened to the familiar sounds with a newly attentive ear, for soon she was to explain, to share them with the daughter who had been so long defrauded of the joys of Las Palmas. To distinguish each note in this half-tuneful, half-discordant melody, she closed her eyes. The pigeons were flapping away from their night's perch beneath the eaves and beginning to murmur—murmur. A *vaquero* galloped by, his spurs clanking on legs that she knew to be cased in leather and on feet she knew to be bare. The hoofs of his unshod horse thudded upon the turf. A dozen other horses and colts raced before him. She heard the whiz of the rawhide lasso as he caught the one he wanted and drove the rest through the gate out to pasture. She heard a *mozo* come to the *pila* and begin to wash crockery in the water that ran eternally in and out of the great stone basin. She heard the birds beginning to twitter. A cock crowed; hens and turkeys clucked and gobbled. . . .

She opened her eyes. The sun had risen higher. It was glancing sharply on the pointed palm leaves; it was flashing on whirlwinds of butterflies. A yoke of oxen ambled splay-footedly by. A *mozo* drove cows and calves to pasture. A rhythmical swish eddied up from the coffee patios—the sound of wooden rakes against cement. The men were scraping the

coffee beans out from their nightly storehouses and spreading them to dry in the sun.

Now the work of the *finca* was well under way, for Las Palmas was no country gentleman's plaything like the show estates of New England. Here coffee was grown, bananas shipped, cattle sent to market. Fifteen hundred—two thousand—*ladinos* and Indians made their living from Las Palmas. Herr Krimler was absolute monarch over this small kingdom, which possessed its own church, its school, its store, and its jail. Don Pablo and his assistant, two *mayordomos*, fifteen *corporales*, and a score of *vaqueros* had their hands full. All of them, including herself and Felipe, were part of an organization that had been running very much as it was today for over two hundred years.

She had not realized these things in precisely this way before. Now she was collecting her generalities for Roberta. Roberta would understand what she meant when her mother pointed out how upon a Guatemalan *finca* today there still existed the social order which had once shed upon Virginia its powerful charm.

Señora Pérez, who had always felt grateful to Las Palmas for its reception of her and Lucía, she who had always loved Las Palmas for its gaiety, now summing it up for a presentation to this stranger who was her daughter, felt suddenly proud of its integrity. It was a real place. One lived here with elemental values. Its essential genuineness vindicated her own personal relinquishment—justified the choice she had made forty-five years ago.

The odour of roasting coffee, the sound of bare hands patting out *tortillas*, came up to her. A dog barked and always, always, although she did not hear it unless she consciously

listened, the river rushed and splashed. The fragrance, the tenderness of life in this tropical air enveloped her, and at the same moment a blast of pity tore at her—pity for the daughter who had been deprived of it all. A violent remorse stunned her. She, the mother, fleeing from icy oppression, had abandoned the child of hers to be slowly frozen to death.

She rose with a suddenness astonishing in so heavy and so old a woman. She rushed through the *sala*, pulling her wrapper together, and waddled down the *corredor* to Roberta's room. The same precipitancy that had carried her as on an irresistible wave away from her daughter's crib so long ago now bore her, upon a returning emotional surge, to that daughter's bedside.

The door stood open but the room was empty.

Roberta's dressing-gown was folded neatly upon the bed which bore the unwrinkled impress of her repose. Her suitcase lay open ready to receive her last travelling items. Her hat and gloves were placed beside it. All was as it should be when she returned from wherever she had gone.

Señora Pérez looked around the room slowly. She saw the toilet accessories upon the washstand. They were few; they were elegant; they were meticulously placed. Something like terror seized the intruder. Not since she had stood in Robert Ingraham's tidy dressing-room had she felt precisely this hopelessness. At what point could she, who all her life—who even this morning—had been borne along on the crest of turbulent impulse, meet this conventionality? What reason had she to hope that the daughter who bore not only Robert Ingraham's name but his nature would welcome a reunion with a mother who had deserted her husband and child to run away

with a lover? Señora Pérez, rolling a distracted eye around the chamber, saw in a mirror facing her an old woman, her white hair streaming upon her shoulders, her bulk gobbled up in a shapeless wrapper.

With a sob she turned and hurried to her own room.

An hour later Señora Pérez, her hair snowily puffed by Manuela, her best peignoir fastened at the throat by a gold brooch, stood upon the west veranda and watched Roberta and Herr Krimler walking up the avenue between the royal palms. Felipe had told his mistress that the manager had offered to show both guests over the *finca*. Mr. Rossman, however, after an early cup of coffee, had gone directly to the *prado* to work on the plane, leaving Miss Ingraham to start out on her tour of inspection at six-thirty.

Señora Pérez was not inclined to quarrel with anyone—not even with Herr Krimler for usurping the pleasure of sharing Roberta's first impressions. She who had thought to embrace a daughter, to shower upon her the comforts of rich tropical ease, was, since the moment in the guest-chamber, humbled and abased. The utmost she dared to hope was to sue timidly for acceptance. If Roberta should be unresponsive, her mother would, with patience and the appeal of docility, try to thaw out that coldness. If her child disapproved of her as an immoral woman, she would meekly bear that disapproval, praying to convert it in time to a larger charity. If the daughter were inclined to reform her as the father had been, the mother would submit. Nay, more, she would be grateful for any attention, even the most censorious. For Señora Pérez was sick with loneliness. It was no longer a matter of bestowing largess upon a child who, for all her privileges, had been

defrauded of the graciousness of life. It was a matter of begging that child to admit a disturbing and unadmirable mother into her prudently locked heart. Oh, if Roberta would only accept her, no matter how grudgingly, Roberta's mother would never ask another favour of the *Eterno Padre*!

Roberta was chatting with Herr Krimler and, as they approached, her crisp modulated accents carried distinctly to the veranda.

"It's the tangle—the lack of restraint and order—in all tropical growth that strikes me so forcibly. This garden here—with begonias as big as tomatoes and geranium plants as tall as apple trees! And everything tearing at and smothering everything else. Of course, it's superb in a way, but I confess it is not congenial to me. Even the odours—those swooningly sweet tuberoses, for instance—how different from the delicate scent of our lavender and mignonette! I sometimes think the qualities I admire most, in a garden as in a person, are discipline and reserve."

"But de tropics are like dat," explained Herr Krimler. "Nudding in dem iss yet entirely"—he hesitated for a word.

"Civilized?" suggested Roberta.

"Ya, civilized."

They had reached the foot of the steps, and Señora Pérez stood waiting until they mounted to the veranda. Her hand, as she held it out to her guest, was steady.

"Good morning. I hope you rested well and that you have enjoyed your walk?"

"Thank you. Yes, to both. I have never seen anything like this *finca* before. It makes me feel as if I had been carried back to feudal times. All these hundreds of serfs—for Herr Krimler tells me they are practically that—supporting an

aristocracy! It is incredible and romantic to a New Englander."

"New Englanders have always been for equality, as I remember. And democracy. You see, we have neither here." Señora Pérez spoke dryly.

"You have a delightful manner of living." Roberta was more than polite. She verged on enthusiasm, and her pale cheeks were tinged with pink.

But her hostess made no effort to continue the conversation.

She was prepared to endure Roberta's disapproval of herself. This patronizing of Las Palmas was different. Señora Pérez was not indignant; she felt no desire to propitiate or explain. She was simply staring into an abyss which yawned between her and the alien from Boston. It was too deep an abyss for her to descend into and to ascend upon the other side; it was too wide to bridge. Doubtless Roberta would like to correct the slant of the cocopalms to a true perpendicular. She would like to put the volcanoes on pledge to go on no more *parrandas*.

During breakfast they spoke about the plane, what territory the day's journey would cover, and the time they would probably reach Panama.

Señora Pérez was thinking: "Only a little while ago I was looking at Las Palmas as I hoped she would look at it. Now I am seeing it as it probably appears to her. She does not envision this dining-room as a great hall hung with the trophies of memories—laughter—hospitality. She sees only a room whose walls need retinting, whose sideboard feet are in tin cans of water to keep the ants from crawling up the legs. To her Felipe is—what is Felipe to her? Only someone

who waits on the table in his bare feet and carries a towel instead of a napkin over his arm. All she understands—or cares to understand—about Don Pablo is that he wears a pink silk shirt and no collar. She thinks these things are not correct and that they are very important.”

There welled up in her an immense protective love for the dear shabby house and the tangled garden, for the acres and acres of rich soil yielding up its harvest. It had loved her and she had loved it. It had enveloped her in happiness, comfort, security. She would not subject it to criticism, to tampering of any sort. She would never permit it to hear that cool voice saying: “Don’t you think these curtains in the *sala* are rather faded? What about some new ones?” She had bought those curtains in England and Eduardo had helped her choose them. They would last as long as she did. Let them hang as they were—obsolete tapestries of feudal times.

“Felipe!”

“*Qué manda?*”

“Miss Ingraham’s plane leaves the west *prado* at ten. See that my ponies and *coche* are brought out. I am going to drive over with her.”

“*Sí, Señora.*”

Although it was well over a year since his mistress had been down the veranda steps, Felipe’s impassive mask betrayed no astonishment. If the ponies had not grown too fat to get into their harnesses, if the *coche* had not fallen to pieces, they would be waiting for her at half-past nine.

There was great excitement as the old Señora came down the steps.

“I haven’t occasioned such curiosity in the kitchen since I arrived forty-five years ago,” she thought. But all she said

to Roberta was: "I had hoped to drive you over the *finca* myself, but Herr Krimler got ahead of me. I shall have to be content with this short excursion to the west *prado*."

"I really hate to leave." The cool voice held a touch of astonishment. "I shall never forget the *finca*—or you, Señora."

"It gives me pleasure to hear you say so. I wish—I wish you could enjoy staying longer."

"I wish I might stay—for ever!"

"Ah, I'm afraid that after the novelty had worn off you would get tired of turkeys on the front lawn and pigeons walking on the kitchen floor. We have no 'discipline' here according to New England standards."

Roberta laughingly vowed that charm was more important than discipline and Señora Pérez did not argue the point.

As they jounced along the avenue, the *cafetales*, planted on either side, approached them, kept pace beside them for a while and then receded. Señora Pérez used to ride daily with Eduardo along this road. For several years after his death she had driven through it once a week. Although she had not come this way for so long, every curve and declivity, the individual characteristics of each plantation, each changing angle of the volcanoes on the eastern horizon, reappeared clear and familiar. How busy the scene used to be during the season when the crop was being lifted! In this *cafetal* Concepción, Jorge's wife, was always picking the red berries with a new baby strapped on her back, its tiny head bobbing back and forth as its mother straightened and bent and reached. In that *cafetal* yonder Antonio's boys used to spend more time frolicking than weeding and cleaning. Señora Pérez had known all the *colonos*, and part of the drive was to stop and ask when María expected her baby, how the *vieja* in José's

cabin was getting along and when Juan was coming back from Los Altos. Now it was so long since she had driven out that she hardly knew a face of any one of the men or women working in the *cafetales*.

She thought: "It is like life. We approach a certain experience; we race or crawl through it and are part of it, our shadow mingling with its shadow. Then it recedes behind us. It is forgotten by us. We are forgotten by it."

A solemnity which was not sorrow walled her in as in a lonely corridor.

All of her life was receding behind her—the grey days of her widowhood, the golden days of her married life. She saw Lucía in a white dress running across the grass; she saw the moonlight on the galleried house in Virginia. All—all were appearing, existing for a few moments, and passing in review even as the *cafetales* were materializing and fading as she drove through them. As long as she lived, the experiences, the people she had loved, would also live in her. When she died—as she must soon die—they, like her, would be blotted out in oblivion. She did not dread death for herself, but she grieved for the death of these dear memories. If there were only someone to whom they could be entrusted, someone who, by cherishing, would preserve them after she had been obliged to let them slip. That is what children are for—to be repositories for the past as well as creators of the future.

Gradually a quiet flood of light outlined her mounting desire, as the dawn had outlined the volcanoes' peaks. She had a daughter—a living child—on whom she could bestow her treasures, upon whose inward vision she could etch the beloved lineaments of Eduardo and Lucía, ensuring them a little longer mortal perpetuity. . . .

Something was sobbing in Señora Pérez's bosom. She felt as if she were fainting. Before she sank for ever beneath the dark flood, she must grasp someone, be held, if only for a moment, in human contact. She lifted her dimming eyes and saw, as if from a great distance although lying so near her own, Roberta's hand. . . .

Despair, elemental revulsion against sinking into the uncompanied grave suffused a haze before her. But even in what she believed to be her moment of dying, even as she conceded the stark comfort of being touched in the coffin by fingers which were not foreign, she found herself staring at that hand. It was firm and neat. It would correct rather than caress, confer improvements rather than receive favours. It was Robert Ingraham's hand! Beaten utterly in spirit, she could not now deny that it might have—did have—a right to impress its last and ultimate revision upon her name, upon her form. But Lucía—must she be improved? Eduardo—must he be corrected? Never! All her wavering gathered itself together in a final recoil. Better oblivion for them as well as for her! Let love—her love—shroud them in their graves.

She was, however, destined to feel the pressure of those fingers once again. As they approached the pasture which had served as a landing-field, Roberta's hand touched her own.

"Good-bye, and a thousand thanks, Señora."

"Good-bye, and a safe journey."

They both spoke as loudly as they could above the noise of the propeller, but neither heard the voice of the other.

Roberta stepped into the plane, a trim, tailored figure turning to wave before the door was closed.

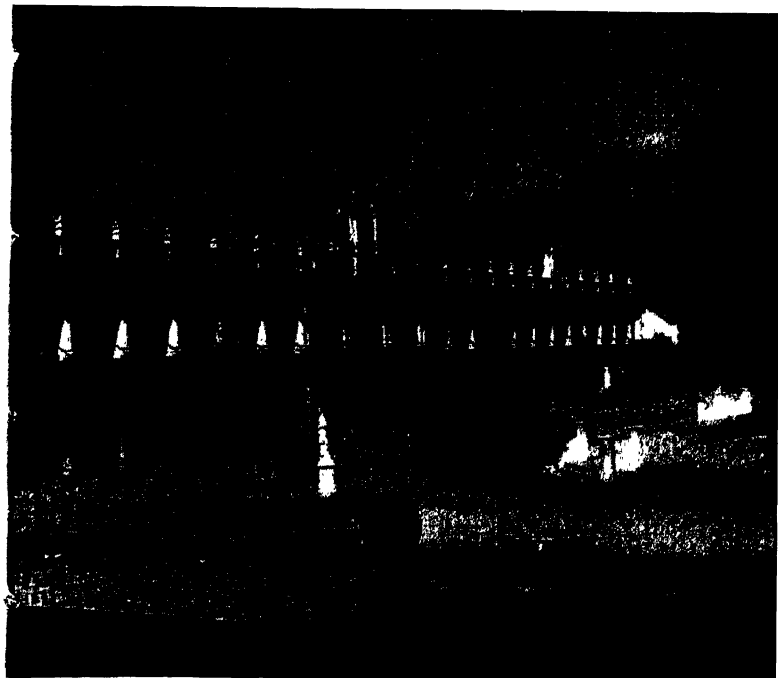
Señora Pérez sat in the *coche* for many minutes, her face upturned, watching her daughter disappear into the sky.

IMAGES OF THE
TIERRA TEMPLADA

“O world, in very truth thou art too young;
When wilt thou learn to wear the garb of age?
World, with thy covering of yellow flowers,
Hast thou forgot what generations sprung
Out of thy loins and loved thee and are gone? . . .

“O world, in very truth thou art too young.
The heroic wealth of passionate emprise
Built thee fair cities for thy naked plains:
How hast thou set thy summer growth among
The broken stones which were their palaces! . . .

“O world, in very truth thou art too young:
They gave thee love who measured out thy skies,
And, when they found for thee another star,
Who made a festival and straightway hung
The jewel on thy neck. O merry world,
Hast thou forgot the glory of those eyes
Which first look'd love in thine? Thou hast not furl'd
One banner of thy bridal car for them.”



The most magnificent city built by Spain in the New World,
between Mexico and Lima.



The settlement which has grown up at the foot of the Fuego
is called Antigua.



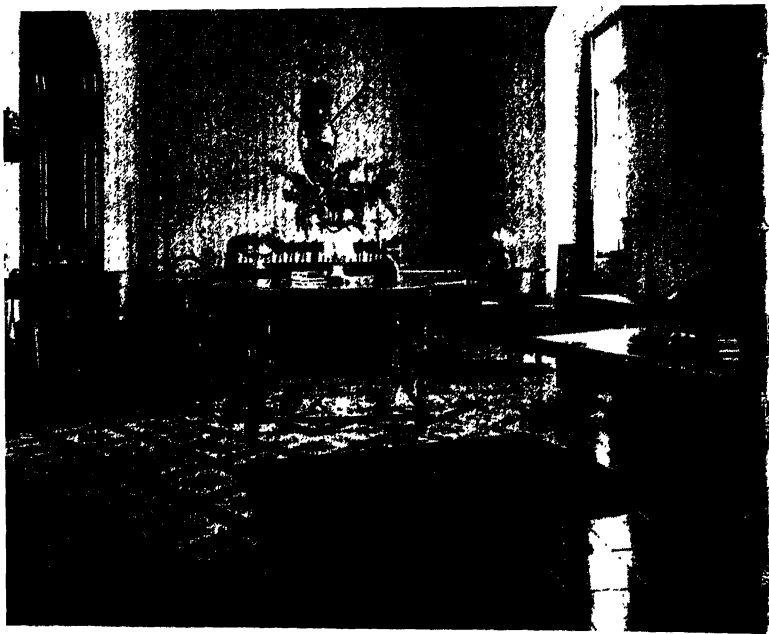
On July 29, 1773, an angry quake shook down a hundred walls and in the space of two minutes all the houses and churches were thrown to the ground.



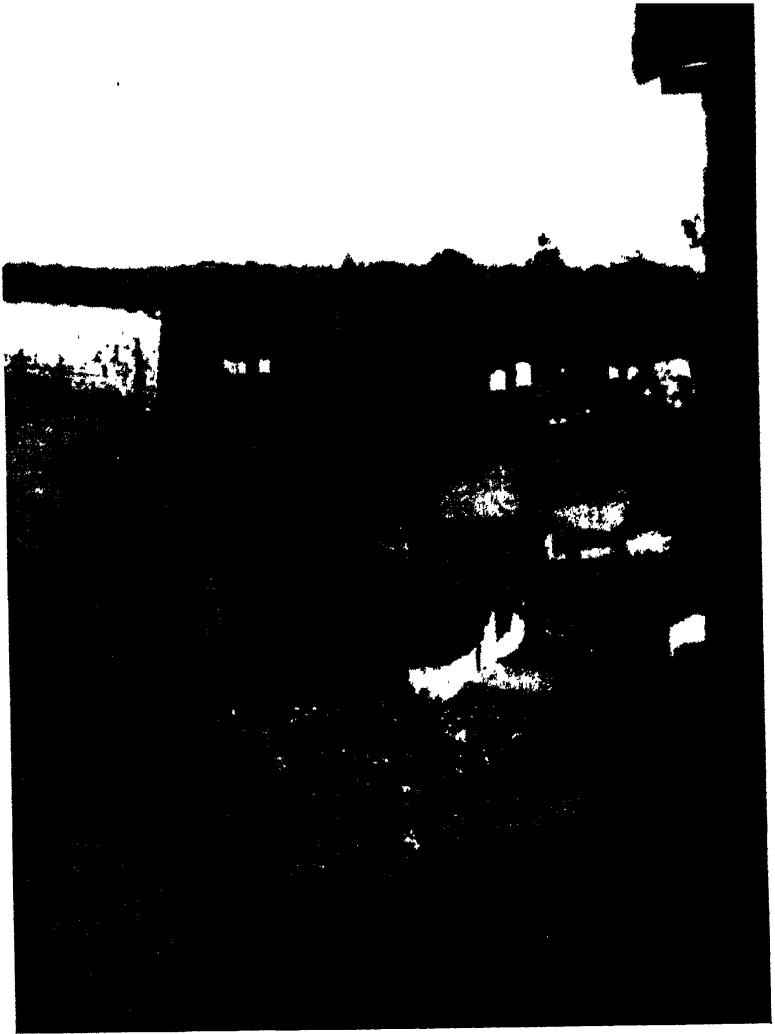
A patio with a once splendid fountain.



Not only the roofs were gone, but even the walls were overgrown with tropical plants and ferny mosses.



He may furnish his chamber with hangings and rich pictures
and cabinets. . . .



An Indian can travel at the steady dogtrot four score miles in a day, with a hundred pounds of pottery, garden produce, or miscellaneous merchandise.



That plateau, five thousand feet in the air, on which is placed
the capital of Guatemala.



IMAGES OF THE TIERRA TEMPLADA



GUATEMALA is a ladder from earth to heaven, an escalade proportioned for supermortals, rising in flight upon flight of thousand-foot steps from the level of the sea to the height of volcanic peaks. Its lowest tread lies even with the Pacific-Atlantic shores; its highest is lost in the clouds. Between the heat of the first—the *tierra caliente*—and the chill of the last—the *tierra fría*—ranges the temperate region—the *tierra templada*.

This middle zone is broken by plateaux serving the mounting acclivity as landings ease a too-breathtaking stair. Such

lofty platforms are free from coastal fever; they are brilliant in an air which rarefies the senses and etches the panorama on every side with a graver of light.

Upon them for hundreds of years before the coming of the white man the Indians spread their fields of maize and placed their dwellings of adobe and thatch. They covered these sunny uplands as naturally as the grass grows; they filled them as irresistibly as the wind, blowing into the valleys, fills them with its breath. The men carved in wood and stone; the women spun and wove the native cotton and dyed it into primitive colours and patterns. They worshipped nature in all its manifestations of the dry and rainy season: they personified the wind, the earth tremors, the mountain torrents, and out of their worship they evolved a pantheon of deities, and to intervene between these deities and themselves they organized a hierarchy of priests.

From time to time during the centuries earthquakes, pestilences, plagues, and volcanic eruptions drove them from their various skyey sites. But when the disaster subsided, they returned as inevitably as the tide, sucked away from the shore, surges back in periodic cycle.

Four hundred years ago the Spaniards, under Pedro de Alvarado, crashed down upon the tranquil aborigines, murdering and enslaving and forcibly baptizing them. The men were exploited and debauched; the women bore children sired by white ravishers; both men and women died by the thousands as they toiled in the erection of cities which the conquerors placed upon those very plateaux which had sustained the happy settlements of the conquered.

Earthquakes, eruptions of fire and water, destroyed the towers of cut stone as they had dissolved adobe walls. The

Spaniards sought other and safer sites, and the Indians returned to their own as irresistibly as the tide, sucked away from the shore, surges back in periodic cycle. They spread their maize fields upon the land of the invaders as naturally as the grass grows.

The first seat of government established by the Spaniards was at Iximché, today the city of Tecpán, and from here the Cakchiquels drove them forth. They settled next in Xepau and again the Cakchiquels forced their flight. They pushed further then to the pleasant vale of Almolonga and, considering the volcanoes which ringed it round as a protection rather than a threat, and not considering the Indians one way or another, they built here their capital, with *plaza* and church, *cabildo* and chapel, hospital and dwellings. In due time this city received from the emperor a coat of arms which represented three volcanoes—the central one, prophetically, in eruption. The Spaniards imported their cattle and their customs from the kingdom across the sea. They baptized the Indians. They even baptized the volcanoes to ensure their everlasting docility. For fourteen years they ruled with arrogance and authority.

On the eighth of September, in 1541, a violent thunderstorm began to rage, and on midnight of the tenth an earthquake shook Almolonga. Suddenly a wall of water poured down the side of that volcano which we call Agua, drowning the people in the streets, flooding the buildings, and bearing them away on its torrent. Doña Beatriz, proud widow of the proud Alvarado, rushed to her chapel on the palace roof, with Don Pedro's child in her arms, and knelt at the foot of the crucifix. But the flood from Agua was not susceptible to Catholic supplication. The roof collapsed and Doña Beatriz was

drowned as meanly as the lackeys below stairs. It is significant to note that Leanor, a daughter of Alvarado by an Indian woman, survived.

Thus perished Almolonga—Ciudad Vieja, as it is now called. Today one traces with difficulty vestiges of palace and chapel. The foundations of the cathedral are half buried in silt. Indians bask in the sun by the graveyard. They have reoccupied the place as naturally as the grass grows.

On the feast of Corpus Christi in 1543 a solemn procession marched from the ruined Almolonga carrying the Holy Sacrament to the site of the newly chosen seat of government, La Muy Noble y Muy Leal Ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala—the fourth capital the invaders had chosen since they forced entry into Guatemala.

This was not only the most remarkable of all the cities which Spain placed upon the dizzying landings of the *tierra templada* but was the most magnificent in the New World between Mexico and Lima. A cathedral, plaza, palaces, and a score of convents rose simultaneously, complete with painted ceilings and sculptured pillars, under the direction of architects and engineers imported from Spain and nurtured in the traditions of the Alhambra. An army of Indian slaves paved the streets, laid pipes which brought the water to the tiled bathtubs, fashioned and placed the tiles over the roofs of the monasteries and the offices of the Captains General. A university, whose library was stocked with volumes, parchment-leaved and vellum-bound, and over whose entrance were sculptured angels bearing books and scientific instruments, was "*fundada en 1675 de aquí irradió la cultura*," as the bronze plaque upon its walls still informs us.

In the patios, behind the studded doors and the shutters of

carved cedar, flowers bloomed in raised beds with fluted edges of masonry, patios made musical by fountains playing into sculptured basins and by birds in cages. Many of the two-storied palaces were topped with colombaria, so that the señor might feast delicately; many carried an upper arcaded corridor where the ladies might promenade. If we would recapture a vision of some of the splendour of those days, we may turn to the pages of Thomas Gage and the description of the apartments of a certain charming and witty nun, Doña Juana de Maldonado. This slim beauty "built for herself a new quarter within the cloister with rooms and galleries, and a private garden-walk, and kept at work and to wait on her half a dozen blackamoor maids; but above all she placed her delight in a private chapel or closet to pray in, being hung with rich hangings, and round about it costly *laminas* (as they call them) or pictures painted upon brass set in black ebony frames with corners of gold, some of silver, brought to her from Rome; her altar was accordingly decked with jewels, candlesticks, crowns, lamps, and covered with a canopy embroidered with gold; in her closet she had her small organ, and many sorts of musical instruments, whereupon she played sometimes by herself, sometimes with her best friends of the nuns; and here especially she entertained with music her beloved, the Bishop. Her chapel or place of devotion was credibly reported about the city to be worth at least six thousand crowns, which was enough for a nun that had vowed chastity, poverty, and obedience."

For two hundred and thirty years priests in lace-trimmed cassocks and embroidered stoles, soldiers with swords and lances from Toledo, grandees on horseback, and ladies borne in litters moved through that picture created by the elegance

of the Old World and the wealth of the New. Over it all arched the ineffable sky of Guatemala. Into that sky the volcanoes of Agua and Fuego pointed their smoke-plumed cones.

Epidemics, religious and political dissensions, cast their fleeting shadows across the pomps and gaieties, but they were pushed aside. Twelve times earthquakes shook the walls hung with oil paintings and tapestries, and twelve times they were repaired. The beauty-loving Spaniards were loath to give up this most beautiful of all their cities. The high plateau, where it is never hot, never cold, but always golden in the golden light of spring, was not to be willingly abandoned.

The Indian men raising maize and grapes and sugar for the white men made no murmur. The Indian women, waiting upon the señores and the señoras in the palaces, made no murmur. But Agua and Fuego grumbled and muttered. In the beginning of the year 1773 they grumbled more or less continuously. Uneasy, the archbishop had his coach drawn into the open plaza and spent several nights there, out of the danger of falling roofs and walls.

On July 29, the day of Santa Marta, an angry quake shook down a hundred walls, and the people rushed screaming into the streets. In the space of two minutes, records an ancient manuscript, "all the houses and churches were thrown to the ground leaving none standing with the exception of the Merced, the façade of the Cathedral, San Felipe Neri, and part of the outside of San Francisco." Then followed the terror, the pestilence, the poverty. "All lament their misfortune. . . . The father seeks his daughter, the son his mother, the husband his wife, and so with all of them. The dead bodies are buried without shrouds . . . and without public attendance, for there is none to see to these matters. . . ."

And now the Spanish conquerors must go forth again, must push thirty miles over the mountain, must establish still another capital in the Valle de las Vacas. This one, their fifth, is the present Guatemala City.

Today even the high-sounding name of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala is forgotten. The settlement which has grown up at the foot of Agua and Fuego is called Antigua, and those of its occupants who are white, more humble than their Spanish forbears, are content to make a livelihood keeping shops, running hotels, and tending to small businesses. Gone is the dome from the three-naved cathedral; gone are the tortoiseshell and the bronze medallions which sheathed the sixteen pillars of its high altar. In its chapels, where stood saints in ivory and silver, the Indian tethers his goat. The volumes of vellum and parchment lie in heaps under the inlaid ceilings. In the patios, once barred by noble doors, the Indian raises four sticks and stretches a bit of matting for a shelter. The roofless chambers of the Compañía de Jesús are jammed with the stalls, the counters, the baskets of venders displaying their pottery and market produce. In the cloisters of the Capuchinas, Indian women bring forth sons and daughters.

Once again the Indians spread their fields of maize and place their dwellings upon the *tierra templada*, covering it as naturally as the grass grows. Once again they halt upon the platform of that stairway, rising in flight upon flight of thousand-foot steps, which is Guatemala. They have returned as inevitably as the tide, sucked away from the shore, surges back in periodic cycle; as irresistibly as the wind, blowing into the valleys, fills them with its breath.



THE PICTURE



CERTAIN beautiful places, certain beautiful objects, seem to exert an enchantment over those who love them—an enchantment which can end only in death.”

The padre spoke that perfect English which is the accomplishment of a cultivated Latin. His hands rested upon the arms of his chair, the small hands of the Spaniard upon a chair doubtless made by other Spanish hands two centuries ago. All the furniture in his study was of the same graceful colonial elegance, although the straw mat which had been

braided to cover the tiled floor and the brightly woven table scarfs reminded one that Antigua was the home of the Indian craftsman as well as of the Spanish artist.

"When I came here to Guatemala ten years ago," he went on, "I was prepared to find in Antigua the finest architecture in the Americas—the finest although in ruins. I knew that the Conquistadores had brought their own engineers and architects, their own artisans; that in the wilderness they had laid out streets and built palaces, churches, and convents. I was prepared for this. I was not prepared for the witchery of this city—here in the tropics where it is never cold—here upon this high plateau where it is never hot: eternal spring-time—for ever and ever. Perhaps it is partly this brilliancy of air—this caress of climate—which so affects one's emotions."

He paused and smiled at me meditatively.

"You are a writer. Well, Antigua is full of stories. Many of them were finished in 1773 when the last earthquake tumbled the palace arcades and the church towers into rubbish. There had been pomp and ceremony of living until that volcano you see there, smiling so enigmatically, ended it all. But it didn't end human passions and attachments. People continued to love Antigua even though the goats grazed in the chancels of the churches and the cactus began to grow out of the convent windows. They love it still. It still has its stories. I will tell you one which began only a few months ago and ended yesterday."

The padre paused and closed his eyes for a moment as if considering how best to present his tale. I waited politely, my eyes resting upon an oil painting perhaps two feet by three, leaning against the wall. As well as I could make out it was

an excellent example of the seventeenth-century Spanish school.

"Is that the famous Murillo I've heard about?" I asked, forgetting that one can interrupt another's silence as well as his speech. "Wasn't it in the house of some old woman who guarded it like a dragon? Wouldn't let anyone see it? One dealer who was disappointed because she wouldn't admit him declared it wasn't a Murillo at all."

The padre opened his eyes with no reproof for my abruptness.

"I will not answer your question now. The answer is the dénouement of the story I have promised you. I will only say that that 'Nativity' was brought from Doña María's house night before last, to be presented to the Cathedral. And now, to begin the story, I shall ask you to come with me a few blocks."

We stepped out into the chequerboard of streets which is modern Antigua: narrow thoroughfares lined by one-story buildings whose tiled eaves project over the sidewalks, and whose blue and pink and white façades are broken by double front doors and by windows with shallow balconies. Here and there a twisted stone column or a carved shutter is incorporated into the present humble building. Occasionally through open doors I glimpsed patios with once splendid fountains, with a fallen pillar, with a broken, noble stair. The huts of the poor crowd up against the portals of what had once been convents of a hundred rooms. They even creep over the thresholds, and tattered washing is spread to dry in courtyards still emblazoned with sculptured coats of arms. Everywhere is decay softened by mossy stains; everywhere is squalor flowering into grace.

“ ‘They dreamt not of a perishable home,
Who builded thus,’ ”

quoted the padre. “A score of churches with their convents, a Cathedral with fifty windows and seven entrance doors—is it not melancholy that man should aspire to immortality through stone and mortar? On the very slope of those two volcanoes they built these tremendous edifices as if by the sheer burden of beauty to weigh down those treacherous mountain sides. Ah, they loved Antigua too well! They adorned her too richly! I sometimes think that most of the sorrow in the world comes from loving some place or some thing more than we should. The story I shall tell you is a proof of it.”

We crossed one more cobbled street and stopped before a door twenty feet high and ten wide.

“Here we are,” said the padre. “This was once the Calle de la Nobleza. This palace was built for the Carlos family. You see the hand-hammered bosses on the door? There is no need to knock; there is no one to answer. And, incidentally, some American antiquarian stole the knocker several years ago. It was in the form of a silver serpent twisted into a circle with its tail in its mouth. Step carefully! There are no tiles left in the *saguan* floor—only mud.”

We found ourselves in a central patio cluttered with piles of earth and broken tiles. A fountain without water stood in its carved basin, with a lizard sunning itself upon the moss-grown rim. An orange tree extended its limbs to the sun, and orchids clung to what was left of a wall. The *corredores*, which had once completely encircled the patio, had fallen, except on one side. Great *salas*, without doors or windows,

were wide to the sky. A hundred-foot cypress grew in the centre of one; earth piled up against the walls of others. It was not easy to say which had been rooms and which patios, since not only the roofs were gone, but even the walls were overgrown by tropical plants and ferny mosses.

"You will have to imagine how it must have looked before the Carlos family were forced, almost at the point of the bayonet, to abandon it," said the padre. "Its paintings and tapestries, its chandeliers of crystal and gold, were famous even in this city of palaces. In one night it became as you see it now."

"I should have thought the family would have abandoned it without any forcing. How could they dare to stay after such a cataclysm?"

"Ah, you do not know the tenacity—the passionate attachment—these people of Antigua had for their homes. Twelve times earthquakes cracked and weakened their walls, and twelve times the inhabitants rebuilt them. It took the dreadful eruption of 1773 to close all argument. The aristocracy moved to Guatemala City—the new capital. Only some *ladinos* and a handful of Indians clung on here. I will show you the manner of their clinging."

He led me through the central patio to one behind. Here a kitchen *pila*, filled with water, clothes laid out on the ground to whiten and dry, and a tethered pig revealed human occupancy.

"Come now," he directed. "You must look into what was once the kitchen. The earthquake left a roof on it and a dozen families moved in. Children have been born, old people have died, all the elemental processes of life have been carried on here for over a hundred and fifty years."

The room was fifty feet long, narrow and lofty, with a ledge which served for a table, a bed, a closet, along one side. Upon the floor—heaved and skewed up by the earth's contortion—a fire was burning under an earthen pot, about which Indian men were squatting, dipping out ladles of food. Over another fire women, their black hair braided with coloured strips of cloth, kneeled as they patted out and baked *tortillas*. Babies, children, and chickens were everywhere. Despite the fires the room was damp. Despite the height of the smoke-blackened walls it was dusky. Both men and women were talking in low tones and paid no attention to our appearance at the door.

“Such living probably looks strange to you, as it did to me when I first came to Antigua,” said the padre as we withdrew, “but there are hundreds of such colonies among the ruins. They light their fires on what were altars of churches; they stretch their sleeping-mats under doorways where ladies swept their brocaded skirts. They use the capital of a sculptured stone column to grind their corn for *tortillas*. Casa Carlos is merely one of many palaces which have come to such uses. The Carlos family moved away, and did not come back—not for over a century and a half—not until five years ago. Then Doña María and her daughter Doña Elena returned. Come a little further. You shall see.”

He led me now to a patio smaller than either of the two we had looked into, of which the walls on three sides were quite intact. Water, gushing from a fountain, splashed into a basin of fanciful grace. There were flowers planted in the raised garden beds. A bird cage hung upon the wall. A bougain-villæa vine was trained along the *corredor* on the fourth side.

“Look now into the chamber which opens on this *cor-*

redor. No—you need not hesitate. There is no one here.”

The room was lighted only by the door and the two windows which opened upon the *corredor*, so that at first I could hardly distinguish what was in it. Then I made out a bedstead of black cedar, whose twisted posts ended in carved twirls, like flames. I made out an antique chair, its leather seat and back softened by a fur rug. Near it stood an earthen brazier bearing the ashes of a recent charcoal fire. A washstand of the same handsome wood as the bed was set with a silver basin ewer. That was all. It was not because these articles were so magnificent that I blinked at them, puzzled. The room, with its ceiling of inlaid polychrome wood, its stained walls which had once been frescoed, its tiled floor, was quite worthy of this princely furniture. The odd thing was the arrangement. Bed, washstand, chair, brazier, and a table with a silver candlestick were placed so close together that they were almost touching, and were all upon a straw mat in the centre of the apartment. The rest of the room was empty. No, not entirely empty. A canvas cot with a poor blanket, a packing-box evidently used as a table, were crowded into a distant corner. Here, perhaps, a servant had slept.

“You are looking at the apartment of Doña María Carlos,” said the padre. “Here she lived for five years, sometimes lying in the bed, sometimes lifted into the chair. Never one step beyond, for she had been injured in an accident and could not walk. That strip of matting confined everything she needed or could touch with her hand. She was surrounded by the same luxurious objects she had always been accustomed to, and she was very happy to be back in her ancestral palace.”

“But the rest of the palace—didn’t its destruction distress her?”

"She thought it had been restored. She thought all those vast *salas* that you saw open to the sky were hung again with paintings and tapestries and lighted by gold and crystal chandeliers as they had been in her great-grandfather's time. She thought the sounds and odours from the kitchen were those of the household servants. I wish you could have seen her, sitting upright in that chair, her white hair parted and waved on either side her proud old face. Arrogant, one must admit, as Spanish grand dames sometimes are, and aristocratic to her fingertips, mentioning casually the Bayeux tapestries in the west *sala*, the ivory Virgin with silver sandals in the private chapel. There is something terrible in one so near the grave still valuing the treasures of this world."

"Incredible! Couldn't she see in this room for instance . . . ?"

"But surely I mentioned that she was blind as well as helpless? It was that which made it possible for her devoted daughter to surround her with the deception. It was that which made it possible for us, who were her old friends, to keep it up, to let her believe that the palace had been completely restored and its treasures reassembled. Many a time have I sat with her—myself upon a common Indian stool—she in her fur-lined throne. She was given her coffee in the one fine china cup that was left. Doña Elena and I drank ours out of pottery bowls. There was one silver teaspoon, one damask napkin. We had neither. Doña Elena slept in that cot: Doña María between linen sheets bearing the embroidered Carlos crest. Ah! It was a strange situation. The *ladinos* you saw were permitted to occupy the old kitchen in return for a daily bowl of soup—on Sunday a piece of chicken. The children brought sticks for the brazier fire and now and then a

little fruit. Thus she lived in her grand delusion, willing to be gracious out of her largess, condescending to us poor folk of Antigua. Well, now you have the setting. If you will walk back with me to my study, I will tell you the story."

Over a glass of port the padre began.

"Jorge Carlos, the husband of Doña María, was one of the most popular men in Guatemala. He lived in a fine house in Guatemala City and owned a coffee *finca* on the coast. In years when the crop was good and prices were favourable, he and his wife and daughter spent six months abroad, where he amused himself by gathering a collection of paintings. His city house was quite a museum, and many a good time have the smart folk of Guatemala City had in it. For Jorge Carlos was a connoisseur of wines and food as well as oil paintings. Like many charming men Don Jorge had a vice and an ugly one. He was a gambler—a card gambler. Twice he lost and once he won back the coffee *finca*. One by one he lost the pictures from his gallery: he lost his silver services; he lost his horses and carriages. But he would not—perhaps, poor chap he could not—stop. Always jaunty and well dressed, one met him on the street after a night of terrible losses and found him full of the most sanguine expectations. He was going to retrieve it all tonight. It was about this time that his wife became paralysed as the result of a carriage accident. She was ill for many months and, when she finally partially recovered, she could not leave the bedroom unless she was carried, and you may be sure Don Jorge saw that she was not carried. There were by this time too many gaps on the wall, too many bare spots where curio cabinets had stood. The dining *sala* looked empty indeed without its silver service. That was the way the deception commenced—gradually, as deceptions do.

Doña Elena fell in with it, I do not think so much to help her father out as to protect her mother from the shock of discovery. Nothing, of course, was touched in Doña María's own chamber. The furniture you saw today was there. So was a famous Nativity by Murillo in a carved gold frame. This was Doña María's favourite picture and it always hung where she could look at it. She loved it, as I have said, perhaps too much. She and her husband had bought it in Spain under romantic circumstances, so that it was for her not only a work of the Master but a sentimental keepsake. As she grew older, all that tenacity of possession which was characteristic of the old Antiguan families, and particularly of the Carlos family, centred upon that Murillo."

The padre paused and sipped his port. So did I.

"Well, in time Don Jorge died, but not before he had completely wrecked his finances, lost the city house as well as the *finca*, and gambled away practically every penny he had in the world. His wife mourned his death with such weeping that it injured her eyes—which was, perhaps, the last good turn her husband did her, for what there was left for her to see would have been more cruel than losing her sight. Doña Elena was left with her blind, bedridden mother, and, after the debts were paid, not a centavo. Poor thing! She must have turned desperately this way and that before she remembered the old palace in Antigua; and, when she did, it must have been with despair. For it was as you have seen: the tiles that should have been on the roof were in the patio; the trees that should have been growing in the patio were flowering in the main *sala*. Only the kitchen and one small *sala* in the rear had a roof. Well, she had the papers of ownership and she cleared out the small *sala* and the patio we were in, and

she let some of the *ladinos* who had been living there stay on if they would help her a little—patch up a broken door or two and bring her wood for the brazier. Then she brought her mother over from Guatemala City, telling her—poor, desperate child—that the old palace had been properly renovated: describing to her in detail how each *sala* looked, drawing upon the accounts of that past glory she had heard all her life. Of course there was nothing—absolutely nothing—to move from the house in Guatemala City after the creditors were through with it—nothing except the furniture in her mother's chamber, which she refused to let go. This furniture she arranged as you saw it today so that everything the old lady could possibly touch was a familiar object. All else she sacrificed to pay her father's debts. There was, naturally, a radical change in the arrangement of the pieces. Since Doña María could not see the Murillo, Doña Elena had it placed on a stand near the bed where her mother could touch it, and a hundred times a day the old hand would thrust itself out until it rested on the carved frame. And then the old fingers would run caressingly over it—over the painted surface—over the time-stained back.

“As time went by and as more strangers came to Antigua, art dealers and antiquarians heard of the Murillo and asked to see it. At first Doña María was very gracious and, after they had examined and admired it, she would tell Doña Elena to take them to the main *sala* and show them the Velásquez and the Correggio. Poor Doña Elena! She managed well, and never was there a stranger who did not instantly see the situation and bear it out. But by and by these callers became a nuisance, particularly when they wanted to buy the Murillo and persisted in making offers and increasing them. Doña

María knew no reason why she should sell her treasure, and Doña Elena, always the most devoted of daughters, could do nothing against her mother's wishes. Finally, after a disagreeably insistent argument with a dealer who had come all the way from New York to get the Murillo at any price, Doña María declared that no more strangers would be admitted on any pretext whatever, that the Murillo was to stay where it was until she died; then, if Doña Elena did not care to keep it herself, she was to give it to the Cathedral. I imagine Doña Elena was quite willing to accept her mother's ultimatum. The visitors, the dealers, and the curiosity-seekers had become a great strain upon her, and she agreed unhesitatingly. And I respected their decision. Those who have lost so much certainly have a right to the only jewel that is left to them—their privacy."

There was another pause as we both sipped our port before the padre resumed.

"And then, a month ago, he arrived—Esmé Giles, one of those Englishmen well dressed but not too well dressed, frank and yet somehow not quite plausible, whose intention is difficult for a Latin to grasp.

"His face, to one who is in the habit of analysing character from features, was contradictory: quite charming in repose and disconcerting when he smiled, showing his teeth. I met him a number of times—in fact he called upon me in my study, as many visitors to Antigua are courteous enough to do—and I always enjoyed his conversation. He was—and there is no doubt about this—a connoisseur of seventeenth-century Spanish paintings, and Murillos were his specialty. He was, he admitted frankly, the best living copyist of Murillo, and had executed many commissions for various museums and

royal galleries. It was Doña María's 'Nativity' which had brought him to Antigua.

"That he should have come from England to Guatemala to see and to copy this particular picture was not surprising, for it was one of the tenderest and most perfect of the Master's early work. But that he should get permission from Doña María to come daily to her house and work upon his canvas, taking the original out into the patio for better light, was most surprising. As I said, for the past two years not a single stranger had been admitted to that room. But he had presented, it seemed, a letter from a kinsman of Don Jorge's in Spain, asking Doña María for this favour, and she, poor lady, had not seen how to refuse. But you must not think that she accepted this infringement on her ultimatum with grace. She was so haughty and so hostile that no one, unless he had been obsessed, would have subjected himself to such studied discourtesy. But Esmé Giles *was* obsessed. There was no doubt about that.

"And the obsession grew. He was mad about all Murillos, but it was easy to see that, as he got farther and farther along with his own 'Nativity,' he became the victim of a desire stronger than himself. I do not believe, when he came to Antigua, he had any plan beyond making as exact a reproduction as possible, and selling it for what it was—a copy. Strange that so sacred a subject could have such a disastrous effect upon one who admired it. Upon one? Upon two. Doña María, instead of enjoying the companionship of an artist who appreciated her treasure to the point of worship, regarded Esmé Giles with increasing resentment. She disliked him; she distrusted him; she did not dare defy the request—which was virtually a command—of her influential kinsman in

Spain, but she devised a hundred ways so to annoy and insult the copyist that he would throw up the project in a rage. One thing which must have infuriated him was her insistence, whenever he was there, of having her chair put so near the original that she could rest her hand upon it. It was as plain as if she had said in so many words: 'You shan't steal it without first knocking me out of the way.'

"If she made no pretence of liking him, he made none of mollifying her. I always rather admired his attitude in this respect—so much more dignified than if he had tried to flatter and win her over as a cheaper man might have attempted to do. He was there to paint, and paint he did, in a thoroughly business-like, impersonal manner. At the end of the session he put his easel and canvas in one corner, covered it with a cloth, said good-bye, and departed. He gave the impression of being oblivious to Doña María, to Doña Elena, to everything but the original Murillo and his copy. During the silent, protracted duel of wills his copy was growing into an extraordinary facsimile. I, who called there every week to administer the Blessed Sacrament to Doña María, was amazed by its fidelity. It was not only the accuracy of drawing, the faithfulness of tone, it was the quality of sentiment which he somehow got upon his own canvas. It was more than clever; it was almost miraculous.

"Doña María, despite her resentment, could not conceal a little curiosity as the work progressed. One afternoon, when I was there, she asked Giles to let her touch his canvas. He explained that this was not possible as the paint was still wet.

"'Let me touch the back of the canvas then,' she commanded.

"So her chair was moved a few feet and she ran her fingers over the back of his canvas.

" 'I see,' she murmured.

" 'What do you see, Doña María?' I asked.

" 'He has even used old canvas so that the back as well as the front will be like the original. That is clever.'

" 'You are the clever one,' returned Giles smiling, 'to feel such a thing through the fingertips.'

"She made no answer. She was vain, as blind people often are, of her sense of touch. 'You have on a new cassock,' she once said to me as I brushed by her. And 'Elena, these roses are beginning to wither. Throw them out and pick some fresh ones.'

"Now, looking back at those last few days, it seems to me that Giles's wicked design did not begin germinating until he saw the end of his stay approaching. His work was done; it only had to dry before he could move it. And he realized that soon he would have to look for the last time on that original which he had grown to love not less but more as he studied to reproduce its secret. His copy might deceive—would deceive—practically everyone, but it would never satisfy him as would the canvas which had deepened into life under the Master's hand.

"It was the afternoon before the end that he asked Doña María if he might, as a special favour, lift the original from its carved gold frame for a few moments and set his own in it, just to make sure that the antique setting would not bring out some small detail which might be caught and corrected. Doña María demurred, as she had always demurred, at every request he had made. She had not even wanted him to leave his canvas and easel in the room—not in the house—over night.

She always refused, and he always overrode her objections. This was not because she was a weak character, for she was indomitable. But Esmé Giles had that driving force which Satan sometimes bestows in return for a soul. The artist, like the woman, had allowed love for a beautiful object to become a fetish. He would not take no for an answer. There was a mortal conflict of wills—the last but one which was to occur between those two fanatics, for by this time they may be so described.

“Giles, with extreme care, in the trembling presence of Doña Elena and under the terrible blind stare of Doña María, removed the Murillo, placed it upon his easel, and slipped his copy into the old frame. It was at that moment I happened to come in, and when he asked me, gaily, which was the original and which was the reproduction, I could only shake my head. They were both originals as far as my eye could tell.

“Doña María permitted him to study the effect for a few moments and then insisted that the original be put back in its frame while I was present. Nothing could have been more deliberately insulting than the manner in which she made this demand, but Giles, with perfect dignity, complied. The shift was made again, and I shall never forget the moment when, one picture on the easel and the other leaning against it, the frame, with Doña María’s hand clutching it, stood empty. That empty frame—that sightless old woman—will remain in my memory for ever. . . .

“Well, Esmé Giles departed.

“He was to come the next morning and take his picture away, and I was glad to hear it, for the tension and the suspicion under which Doña María had been living for the past

month was beginning to tell upon her. And on Doña Elena, too. She, poor woman, had been the buffer all along, and I fancied the moment when she could finally bring the 'Nativity' here, to be placed in the safekeeping of the Cathedral, would hold for her more relief than regret.

"I usually called at Casa Carlos once a week, and, having been there that afternoon, I was somewhat surprised to receive a message that evening from Doña Elena saying she would appreciate it if I would hurry immediately to her mother's bedside. As the old lady had seemed to me in exceptionally good health a few hours before, I could not imagine why I was wanted. But a priest is the servant of his parishioners, and I went at once.

"Although it was not eight o'clock, it was dark out doors, and dark, too, in Doña María's *sala*, since the only light came from one candle in the silver candlestick. Doña María was in bed, and Doña Elena was pacing up and down the room. I had the feeling that some sort of a scene had been recently enacted and that I had been called to bring it to a peaceful conclusion. In fact, as I entered the room, I feared for the old lady who lay as if exhausted upon her pillow.

"As soon as I appeared, they started together to tell me something, but the sentences had not formed themselves before a knock announced another visitor and Esmé Giles stepped in.

"He said he had changed his plans and was leaving Guatemala sooner than he expected. He was going to motor to Palín immediately and there catch the boat train to San José, and thence to San Francisco. He had come for his canvas and to thank them for allowing him to make the copy.

"He seemed to be agitated and somewhat disconcerted by

my presence, and in a great hurry to wrap his canvas in the paper and twine he had brought with him, and to fold up his easel—neither of which tasks were made easier by the lack of light in the room. To my surprise, Doña María was quite affable.

“‘Do not forget us, Señor Giles,’ she said, as he bade her adieu. ‘I hope your copy will give you pleasure.’

“She said these words just as he was going out of the door and I do not know whether or not he heard them. For in the moment between his leaving the room and getting into the waiting motor, I had a sudden dreadful illumination. As plainly as if it were being actually re-enacted before my eyes, there flashed the scene of that afternoon, when one picture was on the easel and the other was leaning against it while Doña María clutched the empty frame. In that moment Esmé Giles—I knew it now—had made a substitution! The canvas that went back into the frame was his copy. That which had been left upon the easel was the original. It was the original which was under Esmé Giles’s arm at this moment—racing towards Palín!

“‘Stop him! I must stop him before he gets to the boat!’ I cried. ‘There is a mistake!’ And I started for the door hoping I could get hold of the telegraph operator at this hour.

“‘Do not disturb yourself, Father,’ said Doña María in a voice of singular tranquillity. ‘All is as it should be,’ and then with a sigh: ‘I am very tired.’

“Something in the way she said, or rather breathed, these last words made me turn sharply. But quick as I was, Doña Elena was quicker. ‘Father! absolve her! She is going!’ And indeed I saw she was.

“‘No! I am not going—not quite yet,’ said Doña María.

'Elena, bring me the Murillo.' And as it was brought close to her, she passed her fingers over its face and over its back. 'Now, Father, it is yours, for the Cathedral. You must take it there tonight. Promise me that!' As she said these words, she smiled.

"I promised even as I prepared her. She died in perfect quietness, her hand upon the frame of the picture. The excitement of the day had been too much for her.

"Glad as I was that I had not blurted out my conviction of what Esmé Giles had done, glad as I was that the indomitable old lady had died in the peace of one more deception, I realized I must now act quickly if we would save the Murillo.

" 'Doña Elena,' I exclaimed, 'I must rush! I must telegraph and catch that rascal! He has the original!'

"Doña Elena shook her head, her hand resting upon her mother's.

" 'Do not disturb yourself, Father,' she told me. 'Just before I sent for you, Mother had me bring both pictures to her. It had occurred to her, as it had to you, what Señor Giles had done this afternoon when he apparently put the original back in the frame. I, who have seen that Murillo all my life, I, who watched the copy being made—will you believe me, Father—I could not tell for certain which was which. He had even used old wood to make the *chassis* on which the canvas was stretched. It was Mother's fingers which detected the substitution; her fingers—so delicate, so possessive—which had so often caressed her dear Murillo.'

" 'And so you—?'

" 'I changed the two canvases and sent for you in case Señor Giles should discover what we had done and commit some act of violence. But he was in a hurry; the room was

dark. So he took his own copy. . . . Father, I am sick of the treasures of this world. I would go to the convent in Salvador. I beg you, take the Murillo into the sacred keeping of the Church.' "



THOMAS GAGE—THE FIRST ENGLISH AMERICAN



THREE hundred years ago the road to Antigua which our automobile follows today was being traversed by a well-fed mule bearing upon its back a well-fed priest.

Although he is in the Dominican habit, Thomas Gage was educated in the Jesuit College. Although he is an Englishman, he speaks Spanish perfectly and pays proper deference to the Spanish authorities. Although the crucifix suspended against his black cassock proclaims his function to be a spiritual one, his shrewd eyes and plump jowls suggest that he is by no

means divorced from the flesh pots of the mundane universe. Father Gage is not the first missionary—or the last—to keep an eye on two worlds.

This is the Golden Era on that plateau stretching itself in the sunshine five thousand feet above the distant Pacific; the Golden Era, that is, for the Spaniards who have contrived so luxurious a civilization in that luxurious climate. Obviously it is not so golden for the original occupants of the *tierra templada*. But white Catholics, fortunate in the favour of the King and the Pope, cannot be expected to worry too much over brown pagans, particularly pagans who refuse to understand the simplest Christian precepts. For the Indians in the parish of Father Gage, and throughout the whole church-encasted region, while they attend willingly and with interest the services in cathedral and chapel, obstinately continue to make idols of stone and wood and clay, to hide them in caves and surreptitiously worship them.

The road, winding around and over the mountains to Santiago de los Caballeros, follows very much the course it will be following three hundred years later when motor cars and motor buses will wheel daily over its macadam and graded surface. The road will be improved. The churches and convents glittering in gold leaf, the wayside shrines and sculptured fountains which mark its curves and ascents in the seventeenth century, will be grey ruins in the twentieth. The countryside, glorious with mountain peak and valley, will remain the same. What are three centuries to volcanoes and clouds, to torrents and rolling pasture lands?

Father Gage, although he has been for a dozen years in Gautemala, is still impressed by its scenic splendour. He jogs down into "a pleasant and delightful valley"; he ascends

"a high and steepy hill." He gazes uncomfortably into "a fearful precipice of two or three miles to the bottom, almost bare of trees, here and there only one growing," and observes "dates as good as those that come from Barbary."

All these things go into that diary he is keeping, and from whose publication he is hoping to make a reputation and money when he gets back to England. For Thomas Gage is extremely intelligent and realizes fully his advantage in being the first educated Englishman permitted, since the conquest, to travel through the Spanish colonies. A few humble traders with neither the opportunity to learn nor the ability to report, a few sailors who have raided the coast but not even glimpsed the rich interior, have brought back fragmentary information. The handful of survivors of the crews of Drake and Hawkins know chiefly the prison cells of the Inquisition. Later Eden, Hakluyt, Purchas, will translate stories of the Conquistadores, and Esquemeling and Dampier will spin lurid yarns about the buccaneers. But to Thomas Gage will remain the distinction of being the first Englishman possessing both the literacy and the opportunity to see and describe the new lands from within. So he keeps his eyes well open, and, despite his natural inclination to ease, sits up night after night in his cold chamber filling pages of his diary with fine, rapid script.

Today he passes a hamlet of three or four native huts where the Indians are bartering squash and beans for pottery and cotton, and as he passes Father Gage notes that these savages "shew much wit in making pans, pipkins, platters, dishes, chafing dishes, warming pans" out of a "kind of earth" and painting them "red and white and several mingled colours."

In the next village two score Indians are dancing in the plaza. On their backs are "long tufts of feathers of all colours, which with glue are fastened into a little frame made for the purpose and gilded on the outside. . . . Upon their heads they wear another long tuft of feathers . . . and on their feet most will use feathers also bound together like short wings of birds . . . and thus from top to toe they are almost covered with curious and coloured feathers."

Father Gage does not delay to watch them. He has, upon a previous occasion, carefully summarized the steps and costumes of these native dancers, and the music as well "made with a hollow stock of a tree being rounded and well pared within and without, very smooth and shining." He has also taken the trouble to find out that "it was the old dance which they used before they knew Christianity, except that then instead of singing the saints' lives they did sing the praises of their heathenish gods," and that it has recently "been danced before the King of Spain in the Court of Madrid by Spaniards who have lived in the Indies, to show the King somewhat of the Indian's fashions." For besides being an accurate observer our Dominican is more or less of a scholar.

The sun grows hotter, and the portly priest pauses for refreshment in the shelter of a wayside church and thinks, while resting for a few moments within, he may as well make a prayer. While his lips are busy with holy words, his eyes are making measurements of the "lamp of silver hanging before the high altar so big as required the strength of three to hale it up with a rope." He remarks also "a picture of the Virgin Mary of pure silver and of the statue of a reasonably tall woman . . . with at least a dozen lamps of silver also

burning before it," and estimates that "a hundred thousand ducats might soon be made up of the treasure belonging to that church and cloister."

As usual such a calculation throws him into a rage against the Jesuits whom he has hated ever since, as a student, he left their college to pass over to that of the Dominicans. His father and mother in Essex are devoted and influential supporters of the Jesuits, and had hoped that this son, like their other three, would be ordained to the Jesuit priesthood, and assist in the strengthening of that order throughout England. They are bitterly disappointed by his conversion, and in the years to come are destined to be even more deeply shamed by his conduct. For ultimately our Dominican is to prove not only an apostate from the Catholic Church but a most despicable traitor to kinsmen and friends. But his moral discrepancies do not prevent him from being a quick and clever commentator; perhaps they even add a dash of spice to his narrative, just as his temper lends liveliness to his priestly authority.

For now, coming out of church and from what he considers an interval of devotion, his voice rings out in peremptory command to his "blackamoors" and he threatens to "baste their ribs" if they do not supply him at once with fresh mules to carry him and his leathern chests upon his journey. Finally, newly mounted, he proceeds. He has addressed his servants in their own language, which he has mastered sufficiently to be able to command, curse, and preach in it. In fact, so assiduously has he applied himself to the Indian dialect that he is to find in 1637, when he reaches England after twelve years' absence, that he will be able to speak only a few words of his mother tongue!

As he winds along the Mixco Valley he is recalling the very

excellent meal he had last night. The main dish was one of those lizard-like iguanas, "the sight of which is enough to affright one . . . like unto a scorpion with some green, some black scales upon their backs." But, he reflects, "when they are dressed and stewed in broth with a little spice . . . they make a dainty broth and eat also as white as a rabbit, nay, the middle bone is made just like the back bone of a rabbit."

Father Gage is very fond of thinking about food, but perhaps we wrong him at this moment. It is possible that he is planning how that night, seated in his little chamber with his books around him and a candle on the table at his elbow, he will recount in his journal the strange story of John Gómez, "head and ruler of the principlest tribe among the Indians, whose advice and counsel was taken and preferred before all the rest, who seemed a very godly Indian and very seldom missed morning and evening prayers in the church and had bestowed great riches there." However, Father Gage not long ago discovered that Gómez was "chief wizard of all the wizards and witches in the town," and that "commonly he was wont to be changed into the shape of a lion and so to walk about the mountains." The priest was properly horrified, and he himself examined Gómez, both corporeally and spiritually, and the upshot of it all was that the wicked Gómez has been hanged and "though his grave was opened in the church he was not buried in it but in another made ready for him in a ditch," and Father Gage congratulates himself upon his vigilance.

It is part of his priestly function to deal with all who, in this heathenish land, have converse with the devil. Take, for instance, Martha de Carrillo. This old woman used to go about the town with a duck following her, which animal was,

without question, "her beloved devil and familiar spirit," proved by the fact that, when the villagers set their dogs on her, "they would not meddle with her but rather run away from her." Furthermore, she lately brought the priest a turkey which was found dead the next day and, if more proof were needed, so bewitched the door of his study that it flew wide open without visible hands. The priest was not to be deceived by her words which were "those of a saintly and holy woman," nor by her pitiful begging to receive Holy Communion. He promptly "rid the town of such a limb of Satan," by sending her to Guatemala City with all the evidences and witnesses which had been found against her, "unto the President and Bishop who commanded her to be put in prison where she died within two months."

Ah, there are plenty of strange things to set down in his journal! Descriptions of the plague of locusts when those insects "did fly about in number so thick and infinite that they did truly cover the face of the sun and hinder the shining forth of the beams of that bright planet." And of earthquakes which stir "the earth with three motions, first on the one side, then on the other, and with a third motion they seem to set it right again."

So he jots down his notes, and so he transcribes them upon the pages of his diary, figuring, hopefully, on the revenue he may expect when it is published as a book. Sanguine as his hopes are, the reality is to be even more lucrative. He is calculating that the Protestants in England will enjoy accounts of the venality of the Catholics in the New World, and so he misses no opportunity to take a crack at the Jesuits. But he does not realize how Elizabeth's anti-Spanish policy is to contribute further to his success as an author. For Cromwell,

restoring England to her power in international affairs, and hoping to excite public opinion in favour of his "Western Design against the Indies," will command a second edition of *The English American's New Survey of the West Indies*. Twenty years after Cromwell, Colbert, plotting the extension of French power overseas at the expense of Spain, will order a French translation of the book in 1677. There will be various reprints as England and France contend for the trade of the Spanish Indies. Even Germany and Holland will order translations, for everyone knows that the easiest way to start a war or to put through unfair trade legislation is to convince people that their economic rival is also a villain.

Shrewd as Gage is, he cannot at this time foresee the political implications which will make his book a "best seller." But it is always a good idea to cater to the popular anti-Spanish sentiment in England and he has therefore already written at length in his journal: "It would grieve a Christian's heart to see how by some cruel Spaniards . . . those poor wretches (the Indians) are wronged and abused: some visiting their wives at home whilst their poor husbands are digging and delving; others whipping them for their slow working; others wounding them with their swords or breaking their heads for some reasonable and well-grounded answer in their own behalf; others stealing from them their tools; others cheating them of half, others of all, their wages . . . and thus from the poor Indians those unconscionable Spaniards practise a cheap and easy way of living."

It will heighten the villainy of the Spaniards to present their victims in as noble a light as possible, so he proceeds: "As for their carriage and behaviour, the Indians are very courteous and loving, and of timorous nature and willing to

serve and obey and to do good. . . . They are very trusty, and never were known to commit any robbery of importance, so that the Spaniards dare trust to abide with them in a wilderness all night although they have bags of gold about them. So for secrecy they are very close, and will not reveal anything against their own natives, or a Spaniard's credit or reputation if they be in any way affected to him."

He furthermore recalls their attitude of respect towards any priest and their custom of never appearing before one without offering gifts. Those gifts—this leads our missionary into further agreeable channels of thought.

He is on his way to one of the outposts of his parish where he will christen and marry the Indians and celebrate Mass, and he is making a calculation. Each christening means two reals; "every marriage two crowns . . . everyone's death two crowns more at least and some . . . who would leave ten or twelve crowns for five or six Masses to be sung to their souls." Then there are the "offerings cast into the chests . . . for souls in Purgatory," and "what the Indians offer when they come to speak unto me (for they never visit the priest with empty hands) and what with the other Mass stipends . . . might yearly amount to five hundred English pounds."

Neither is he forgetting the candles which the devout Indian places before the statues of the saints. These constitute a very handsome perquisite for the priest since he will not suffer "the Indians who bring the candles to light more than one before the saint and to leave the other before him unlighted (having formerly taught them that the saints are as well pleased with the whole candles as their burnt candles). . . . After Mass the priest may . . . have . . . fifty or a hundred candles which may be worth unto him twenty or

thirty shillings, besides some odds and ends." These he will sell back again to the Indians five or six times over. "And because they find that the Indians incline very much to this kind of offerings, and that they are so profitable unto them the friars do much press upon the Indians in their preaching this point of their religion and devotion."

Neither are the candles and the money all. Every day before the statues of the saints food is left which the priest "after Mass wipes away to his chamber." On certain days these offerings are tremendous. "A friar that lived in Petapa boasted unto me once that upon their All Souls' Day his offerings had been about a hundred reals, two hundred chickens and fowls, half a dozen turkeys, eight bushels of maize, three hundred eggs, four sontles of cacao (every sontle being four hundred grains), twenty clusters of plantains, above a hundred wax candles, besides some loaves of bread and other trifles of fruit. All of which being summed up according to the price of things there . . . mounts to above eight pounds of our money, a fair and goodly stipend for a Mass, brave wages for half an hour's work: a politic ground for that error of Purgatory, if the dead bring to the living priest such wealth in one day only."

And now being thirsty, and the roofs of Santiago de los Caballeros where he will lodge that night still being hidden behind the mountains, the priest stops at a small *cantina* of white-washed adobe, with a vine over the grilled window and a painted sign above the door.

As he sips a glass of wine, he chats with the Spanish proprietor, for it is part of his policy to be affable to whatever white man he meets in this land of red pagans. As he chats with his host, he is gathering more material to clap into that

diary, material which will be sure to please English readers who are anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish.

He will show them clearly "how a friar that hath professed to be a mendicant, being beneficed in America, may live with four hundred pounds a year clear, and some with much more, with most of his clothing given him besides, and the most charge of his wine supplied, with the abundance of fowls which cost him nothing, and with such plenty of beef as yields him thirteen pound for threepence! Surely well may he game, buy good mules, furnish his chamber with hangings and rich pictures and cabinets, yea and fill them with Spanish pistoles and pieces of eight, and after all trade in the Court of Madrid for a mitre and fat bishopric which commonly is the end of those proud, worldly and lazy lubbers."

He is so indignant about the avariciousness of the Jesuits that his own practices along this line quite escape his attention.

He sips his wine, pays his score, says an affable good-bye to his host. Then, having watered his mule and berated his Indian servant, our traveller mounts again and proceeds along the winding road.

The Volcán de Agua is now in full view, "a goodly prospect to the sight, being almost all the year green and full of Indian *milpas* which are plantations of Indian wheat; and in the small and petty towns which lie some half way up it, some at the foot of it, there are roses, lilies and other flowers all the year long in the gardens, besides plantains, apricots and many sorts of sweet and delicate fruits."

Today, however, he pays scant attention to this "goodly prospect." Other matters occupy him: schemes for extracting additional offerings from his docile parishioners; recollection.

of his feast a few nights ago in the Indian town of Acacabastlan "which for fish is held the best in all that country." Good fish it was, he recalls, that *bobo*, "a thick, round fish as long or longer than a man's arm, with only a middle bone, as white as milk, as fat as butter, and good to boil, fry, stew or bake." He is also forecasting how best to convert some of his bulky thousands of coins into precious stones and sew them into his quilt "which might make my carriage lighter" on his long return journey to England. His "books, chests, cabinets, quilts and many good pieces of household stuff," besides "the many rich pictures which hang in my chamber," he proposes to sell to the town of Petapa for the church (which the government willingly agrees to).

For, after a dozen years in Mexico and Guatemala, Father Gage is anxious to return home and enjoy his ample income. This is not easy to compass, as the Dominicans wish to keep their missionaries in the field to build up the work they start. But Father Gage cares no more for the Dominicans whose habit he wears than for the Jesuits, whose habit he has abjured.

In fact, when he really does reach England, and finds it serves his purpose to accept a substantial Anglican living in Kent, he will lose no time in repudiating his allegiance to the Catholic Church altogether, and preaching a recantation sermon in St. Paul's. In order to make his conversion doubly convincing he will even enter "into the state of marriage which the Church of Rome disavows to all her priests," and just for good measure and as final proof of his worthiness for promotion in the Church of England, he will give secret information against Thomas Holland, who had been his school-mate in the seminary of the English Jesuits at St. Omer. This

boyhood association will not deter Thomas Gage from charging Father Holland with the capital crime of celebrating Mass on English soil, on which testimony Holland will be hanged and quartered at Tyburn.

These events are still in the future.

Today as our English-American Jesuit-Dominican winds along the Valley of Mixco he is cudgelling his wits for some way to get out of Guatemala with his accumulated wealth. Suddenly it occurs to him that religious scruples may effect the speediest removal from the mission field.

Ultimately, he is to decide upon this course, and to indite in his journal: "Here I grew more and more troubled concerning some points in religion, daily wishing with David that I had the wings of a dove, and that I might flee from that place of daily idolatry into England and be at rest. I resolved therefore to put on a good courage and rely wholly upon my God [a few pages previously he has remarked that "my money is my best friend to assist me by sea and land"] knowing that the journey was hard and dangerous and might bring shame and trouble to me if I should be taken in the way flying and brought back to Guatemala: here I weighed the affliction and reproach which might ensue unto me after so much honour, pleasure and wealth which I had enjoyed for about twelve years in that country. So for faith and safe conscience I now purposed likewise with Moses to forsake Egypt," and so on and so on in the most sanctimonious phraseology.

By this time our traveller is in sight of the city we now call Antigua.

He sees the dome of the cathedral, and his mouth waters as he anticipates a fowl seasoned with red chili, a boiled stalk of tender green maize, a preserve of "the daintiest and most

luscious piña," venison, partridges, and a bottle of excellent wine waiting for him at the table of a brother Dominican.

He has, in the course of his day's ride, collected material for half a dozen more pages of that diary, which is so sprightly, so full of curious information, that long after it has ceased to be valuable as political propaganda it will be reprinted again and again for that ever-increasing army of readers in Europe and America who are not inclined to be too critical of the morals of an author if he is sufficiently amusing.

Thomas Gage has planned a course of action which will bring justly deserved contumely upon him from his family, his church, and his country. He does not foresee his future literary fame or greatly care about more immediate reproaches. Twelve years as a missionary in Guatemala have guaranteed him a fortune and given him enough entertaining stories to ensure his invitations to dinner parties for the rest of his life. And this suffices for the first English-American to bring a report from Guatemala after the conquest.



RUS IN URBE



THE streets in Guatemala City are narrow and so cumbered with automobiles, ox carts, pack mules, soldiers on horseback, a landau drawn by ponies, pushcarts and coughing motorcycles that the traffic policeman, under his stationary umbrella, waves a white-gloved hand excitedly and, with importance, shrills his whistle.

The sidewalks in Guatemala City are narrow, and upon them shoppers and saunterers elbow beggars and venders of sweets and sherbets; nurse maids steer perambulators through beves of school children in uniform.

Through all this jumble there moves, in noiseless, rhythmic dog trot, with head held rigid by a leather band across the forehead and shoulders bent forward under the weight sustained by this same leather band, a vividly clad Indian.

Although he does not raise his head to glance to left or right, although he does not slacken his rapid, forward-falling pace, he threads the sidewalk, he crosses the street, without jostling a pedestrian, without impeding for a moment the tangled traffic.

City sounds blare up about him: the honk of the motor, the blare of the phonograph, the clang of a tram gong, the policeman's whistle. He does not swerve or hesitate or even raise his eyes. Composure and self-possession are compact in him. The tourist in Guatemala City stares at the brilliant half-bent figure which materializes and dematerializes like a symbol, decorative but undecipherable. The Indian does not look at the tourist. His dignity, like his even pace, makes no concessions.

An Indian can travel at this steady dog trot four score miles in a day. He thinks nothing of packing the wooden frame, resting upon his shoulders and held by the leather tumpline across his forehead, with a hundred pounds of pottery, garden produce, or miscellaneous merchandise. He can negotiate with ease a coffin, a set of chairs topped by a table, fifty earthen pots, or a quarter-of-a-ton block of ice. No conglomeration of freight is too unwieldy or too incredible.

The woman, costumed also in primary reds and blues, follows close behind. She, however, carries her jug or basket upon her head because her shoulders are pre-empted by a child slung in a shawl. Flowers, fruit, fowl, nod from a tray upon her head; small brown feet swing from the improvised

hammock at her back—all swaying in time with the motion of her quick, barefooted progress. She, like her husband, will trot thirty miles to market in the morning and home again at nightfall and, if at the end of the day's bartering her basket or tray is empty, she may place a few rocks in it, since habit has made it easier to travel with a weight than without one.

Before the Spaniards brought them to the New World, beasts of burden were unknown in Guatemala. The ox, the mule, the horse, were as terrifying to the aborigines as griffons and unicorns would have been. When the soldiers of Alvarado appeared on horseback, the bravest Indians fled or prostrated themselves in fright. One horse, left behind, was fed by the natives with fruit and flowers until it—not inexplicably—died. Although the *vaquero* delights in plying his spurs as he rounds up cattle on the white man's plantation; although the ox cart crawls up and along the mountain roads, its canvas hood swaying, its heavy wheels creaking; although the donkey patters into market beneath a load larger than himself; the great mass of Indians still prefer to trust to their own legs for locomotion. "Horses tire. We don't," they say briefly.

Trot—trot—trot—up the mountain passes, down the defiles that skirt the ravines . . . Trot—trot—trot—up from the hot lowlands . . . Trot—trot—trot—down from the cold uplands—all roads converge at last upon that plateau, five thousand feet in the air, on which is placed the capital of Guatemala. Into the city, then: trot—trot, over macadam . . . trot—trot—over villainous cobblestones, made rougher by earth tremors that have rumpled them into ridges. Trot—trot—along the sidewalks, and over the fashionable boulevards. Trot—trot—across the plaza, past the shadow of the cathedral, and so into the market place.

The Indians who have been reared outside the city never lose this peculiar, rapid, forward-falling gait. American housewives in Guatemala sometimes stipulate for house servants only Indians who have never worn shoes. Feet which can travel a hundred miles over rough country without wearying are dependable on the tiled floors of patio houses.

There are carriages and automobiles and motorcycles in Guatemala City. There are buses and taxis and trams. A railway winds up the half day's journey from the Pacific coast and the full day's journey from the Atlantic. There is airplane service from Mexico and Panama. These things serve the handful of Guatemaltecos who trace their ancestry back to Seville and Andalusia, and the scattering of Englishmen, Americans, and Germans whom business or pleasure brings to the capital city. But the brown-skinned host, tilling their cornfields, fashioning upon a wheel their earthen jugs and bowls, weaving upon hand looms their striped and checked cloth—thousands upon thousands of these men and women have never in their lives been farther than they could go on their bare feet, have never been transported upon a wheel or even upon the back of a beast.

As beads are picked up and threaded, so the isolated figures hurrying out from hamlets unmarked on any map are threaded into a multi-coloured strand upon the highway. Each tiny image of earth is a visible bead upon that chain—a chain unrolling, unrolling, without a broken link out of yesterday across today.



SOUNDS



THE clatter of donkey hoofs over the cruel cobblestones; the squelch of splay-footed oxen as they plunk unto a muddy depression in the road; the rapid pat of unsandalled Indians; a crash of a two-wheeled cart as it lurches against the curb. . . . That unvarying musical phrase of thin whistling notes is the scissors-grinder, announcing his approach; this "honk" is shaken from a motor car jouncing over the rumpled paving-blocks. One dog yaps and then another. Birds twitter from the heterogeneous array of cages swinging in open casements. Now thunder pummels

the sides of the mountains, reverberating in deep undertones and rolling away into inaudibility. And immediately the rain drops straight down from the sky in a solid weight of water, flooding the streets, splashing the tiled roofs, drenching the great leaves of the potted plants standing in patios which are immediately inundated. And, at regular intervals, beating through the multitudinous resonances and echoes, the bells from the cathedral and half a hundred churches chime and jangle through the rain, above the traffic—each peal in its characteristic measure—to remind man that his constant and chief concern is to seek God and adore Him.



SMELLS



ODOURS of unfamiliar cooking and spicy condiments disintegrate in the air. The aroma of roasting coffee is permeated by the sour whiff of fermented corn which is being ground with a stone pestle in a stone mortar for *tortillas*. Tuberoses and gardenias, violets and lilies, crammed upon florist's counters and proffered by street venders diffuse a swooning perfume. Incense from innumerable churches mingles with the acrid emanation of human bodies and of strong, fresh vegetation steaming in the sun after the beating shower.



THE HOTEL



A CROSS section of a hotel in the United States is a slice of many-layered cake standing on end. In Guatemala the slice lies on its side. In a land of earthquakes it is safest for buildings to be on one floor, or two at the most.

The largest hotel in Guatemala City has a central lounge quite two stories high, with a gallery. But most of its size has been attained by a gradual accretion of ground space: by pushing out a corridor here, by appropriating a courtyard there, by including a corner shop and incorporating an erst-

while office, until finally, in a labyrinth of passages and patios, the hotel has absorbed almost the entire block.

Like an intricately patterned shawl the caravanseraí is spread out, its four edges making the four straight, noncommittal façades of the block. But the fringe of the shawl still harbours an odd collection of particles: a foreign legation, a French fashion shop, a *cantina*, a bar, Turkish baths, private houses, a pension, a florist's, a German restaurant, a grocery shop, a room in which a marimba band makes diligent thunder, and, most incongruous of all, completely hidden and reached only by a sort of interior channel, a church!

This last is so deeply embedded in the buildings that have gradually surrounded it that it is practically obliterated. One may live in the hotel for weeks puzzled by the nearness of matin and angelus bells, and by an occasional whiff of incense, and one may walk around the block again and again hunting for the source of such ecclesiastical sound and scent. It is only with the discovery of a stairway to the hotel roof, from which one can look down upon and into the block of honey-combed complexity that the church is discernible behind shop and restaurant, so crowded by the marimba practice room that its chants must often be drowned out by that resonant hammering.

Who attends the little church elbowed completely out of sight by such mundane pressure? Only from the hotel roof is it possible to trace its outlines, and make out the narrow entrance passage between two offices. But altar bell and chant, tinkling through a momentary cessation of street sounds, testify that certain ones conduct the daily services and certain others attend them.

Looking down upon this entity, lost and yet not lost in

that amorphous block, one remembers Marcus Aurelius's apostrophe to the ignored but indestructible soul embedded in the fleshly "members of this kneaded matter which has grown around thee!"



HOTEL BEDROOM



IT is thirty-five feet long and twenty feet high, with a tiled floor and a ceiling of panelled mahogany, from the exact centre of which—well out of reach of hands which might attach to it an electric iron or curling tongs—is suspended a single unshaded bulb.

Between the costly ceiling and the priceless floor extends half an acre of that clotted chocolate and crimson wallpaper which is ordered anew after each rainy season to refurbish the *salas* of all good Guatemaltecos.

The entrance door, opening from an outer corridor, oc-

cupies one wall of this lofty chamber. The wall opposite is dedicated to a carved wardrobe of prodigious proportions, whose depths conceal a nail or two for hanging clothes, and whose mirrored doors hold locks which do not lock. The third wall is occupied by two non-matching white iron beds, made up with embroidered and hemstitched linen sheets tucked in a yard at the bottom and turned down a yard at the top. Beside them there is a stationary washstand whose faucets bear the words *fría* and *caliente* but which both give forth an impartial trickle neither *caliente* nor *fría*.

The centre oasis is occupied by a rocking-chair imported from the United States and a spindle-legged varnished table bearing a vase of calla lilies grandiose enough to overwhelm the bier of an emperor. So much for the floor space and three walls of a *sala* which could accommodate a convention of a hundred.

The fourth wall is merely a frame for three full-length French windows with duplicate shutters opening directly into a private patio, its floor in blue and rose and yellow mosaics, its raised garden beds planted with palms and ferns and blooming geraniums and lobelias. Sequestered and yet open to the air and sky, the patio is both living-room and garden.

This suite of indoor and outdoor privacy, this jumble of the splendid and the shoddy, is thrown open to your occupancy with a flourish and a bow.

A chambermaid will turn down the linen at night. At day-break a "boots" will leave your burnished shoes outside upon the doorsill. In answer to your morning bell a waiter will place in the patio a breakfast tray of coffee such as only Guatemala knows, croissants, and a bowl of rainbow fruit whose pulp is smooth and cool as sherbet.

When an interior decorator from the United States attempts to reproduce the atmosphere of a tropical *mise en scène*, he selects the graceful features, eliminating the tawdry makeshifts. He produces a tasteful unity which brings exclamations of satisfaction from those whose ideas of Latin America have been gained from theatre sets, pent-house terraces, and exhibition galleries. But to those who are familiar with the artless hodge-podge of the commodious and the incongruous which is so bewitching and so integral a part of Guatemala, the decorator's studied apartment seems airless. The illusion he sought has escaped his artifice. The feathered bird is caged before us. But he does not sing.



MATER DOLOROSA



FROM a patio secreted in an innermost honeycomb of the hotel hive and concealed from the corridor passage by a wooden lattice, seeps daily the odour of suds and drying clothes, sounds hourly the rhythmical rub of the washboard and the slosh of wet garments.

A woman who has been stopping in the hotel for several weeks, and occasionally uses this unfashionable corridor, yields one morning to curiosity. She tries the gate in the lattice; it opens, and she steps into the roofless enclosure, across whose open centre are strung crowded clotheslines. Under a

projecting strip of the tiled roof she sees a figure bending over a tub. Beside her, on the cement floor, crawl two babies, pausing to finger now and then their only playthings—a few crumbs of soap. This is their familiar nursery. Schooled to be quiet, lest they disturb the guests of the hotel, they stare at the stranger wonderingly. The washwoman turns around, a little frightened at an anticipated complaint.

The intruder allays her alarm. In halting Spanish she pretends some question about her laundry, and then, in the language all women understand, she praises the children. She did not know they were there! She has never heard a chirp from them! she declares. They are certainly wonderfully good! The mother smiles and, wiping the perspiration from temples sunken by toil and weariness, presents first one and then the other for the visitor's admiration.

"Yes, Señora, I have five and, God willing, soon another." And then earnestly: "I am only twenty-three."

The older woman looks with compassion at the younger whose face has been more deeply scored, whose body more strained by twenty-three years than her own by forty. She pities the too-docile babies whose only playroom is the laundry floor. She pities the young mother whose maternity has been exploited so fiercely, so lushly. At a loss for words of compassion she lifts the babies in her arms and strokes the Murillo-rounded cheeks and the Murillo-soft hair. A scapula hangs upon a cord around each tiny neck. The image is that of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of all Sorrows.

Now it is the laundress's turn to play hostess and to make conversation. She smiles and nods at her caller, so slim, so fresh, so prettily dressed.

"But you, Señora, how many children have you?"

"I? I have none."

The soft Spanish eyes grow softer. From the ashes of the young mother's beauty leaps a flame.

"Oh, Señora!" she exclaims compassionately. "Poor Señora! How I pity you!"



IN THE PATIO



IT was not because the patio was small that the air in it was surcharged, not because its walls were thick that they repelled any sound from without. The patio was, in dimensions and location, similar to hundreds of others behind the one-story façades which lined the street. If the Guatemalan moonlight seemed to sink into this particular sealed enclosure as into a well, if the natural ozone seemed to be sucked out and refilled by a strained hush of expectation—these phenomena were not due to atmospheric conditions. They emanated in almost visible streamers from two

figures under a lamp which was suspended from the tiled eave. This narrow overhang served as a roof along one side of the patio.

The man, who was young and good-looking, was stretched in a wicker chaise-longue smoking a Guatemalan cigarette and absorbed in the *Saturday Evening Post* which had been brought that afternoon by the steamer from New York. The woman was sitting—graceful, upright, and tense—her hands clasped upon the table before her.

She was listening for something.

It was from her, not from her relaxed companion, that those streamers of expectation flickered and sent out through the moonlight their tentacles of quest.

Suddenly it sounded—the knocker of the front door, which, as a matter of fact, was the only door of the house, and Fernando appeared instantly from the kitchen to answer it. Fernando stayed longer hours, did more work, and received less money than any other house boy in Guatemala City. Tecla Fenn had a way with servants. They did not like her, but they felt themselves riveted by a belief that only death could deliver them from her domination.

At the sound of the knocker Dick Fenn looked up from his loosely held magazine.

“Must be Mr. Morris,” he remarked.

Tecla sat perfectly still as if taking this final moment to fasten the thread, fold and stow away the mental tapestry she had been working upon with such concentration. When she did look up, she was entirely prepared.

“Of course it’s Mr. Morris, silly,” she replied, with the indulgent smile of a woman who regards her husband as a small boy and loves him for that reason. Tecla’s accent was

quasi-English. Malicious people were always waiting for her to drop it in some inadvertent moment, but she had never been heard to do so. It was crisp, agreeable, and possibly genuine.

Fernando showed Mr. Morris in as punctiliously as if this caller had not been a daily—or rather, a nightly—visitor at Casa Fenn for the past seven months. And Mr. Morris as punctiliously hesitated for a moment upon the threshold, since he belonged to that old-fashioned school which invests even common ceremonies with a touch of ceremoniousness.

“Good evening, sir!”

Dick had sprung up from the chaise-longue and was hospitably taking possession of the older man’s grey topcoat and grey fedora. Tecla never failed to be gratified that her husband’s engaging naturalness held its own against the formal correctness of even Mr. Morris. In whatever ways poor Dick had disappointed his wife, his manners had never fallen short of her exacting standards.

“We are delighted to see you,” she said, going forward with outstretched hands. And then, as Mr. Morris kept hers for a moment in both of his, she added smilingly: “I think you must know by now how delighted.”

“My dear Tecla, you and Dick have made me believe that for a long time.” And still holding Tecla’s hand in one of his, he placed his other affectionately upon the shoulder of his host. “What would my stay in Guatemala have been without you? But then, I wouldn’t have stayed except for you two children.”

The momentary tableau fell apart. The three moved to their seats with the directness of people accustomed to occupy

assigned places. A fourth observer might have felt something rehearsed in this simultaneous, noiseless rearrangement, almost as if these three figures were automatically impelled to do precisely what they did in precisely this manner and measure of time. There was, however, no fourth observer. There seldom was at Casa Fenn.

Now the light from the lamp suspended from the overhanging eave fell upon three figures instead of two. Dick Fenn, stretched out on the old chaise-longue, his hands clasped behind his head, stared emptily up into the open oblong of sky. Tecla seated herself exactly as she had been before the arrival of their caller, and Mr. Morris took a chair opposite her with the table between them.

"A steamer in today—did you get letters?" asked Tecla casually, her eyes not upon the caller but upon her own clasped hands lying before her on the table.

"Nothing of interest to you, dear child, unless possibly a note from my sister-in-law in Boston, Lilian Adams. In my last letter to her I had written a great deal about you and Dick and she asked me to thank you both for all your kindness to me."

"I don't suppose you mentioned your many kindnesses to us?"

Tecla now raised her eyes and looked directly at the compact little gentleman opposite. His grey suit and grey tie were the same colour as his hair and eyes and carefully trimmed moustache. Everything about him was neat and neutral in tone and of the best quality.

"I wish I had some to mention," he said. "Dick, what is the matter with this wife of yours? She will never let me give her as much as a pocket handkerchief."

"As little, you mean," grinned Dick. "You've practically handed your car over to us."

"Pshaw! Only when I'm not using it."

"Is your sister-in-law—is Miss Adams—at all like your wife?" asked Tecla abruptly.

"Lilian? Like Ruth? Like Mrs. Morris?" Mr. Morris smiled wistfully. "You wouldn't know they were sisters. Miss Adams—she is several years older than Ruth—is a practical—I think I may say a possessive person. My dear wife was quite the opposite. When that legacy was left them, equally divided, Miss Adams immediately engaged an extremely able Boston lawyer to handle her share, to invest it and advise her. The first thing Mrs. Morris—Ruth—did was to run to Cartier's and buy me this scarfpin"—he tenderly touched a clear red ruby that shone in his grey necktie—"this watch I always carry, and this ring. It was absurd, of course, for I had never worn jewellery. But I have worn these particular pieces ever since. . . ."

His voice trailed off, and his small features softened under that look of reminiscence Tecla had come to know so well.

For a few moments no one spoke in the half-shadowy, half-brilliant patio.

Dick had given up the pretence of reading or even listening to the two at the table and was blinking at the sky with the contentment of a man accustomed to inertia of mind and body. Tecla was again studying her hands clasped on the table before her. Her face—that oddly shaped face with delicately high cheekbones and slightly slanting eyes—seemed like the patio, sealed. Mr. Morris's countenance, on the other hand, was undergoing a remarkable alteration. The reminiscence which had softened his habitually composed features had in-

tensified into an eagerness almost embarrassing in its nakedness.

"I wonder, Tecla, my dear," he spoke diffidently, and yet the same avidity that was so curiously stripping his face trembled in his voice, "I wonder if you feel like writing to-night?"

Tecla slowly raised her eyes and looked at the man opposite her. She hesitated and then nodded.

"Yes. I will try if you want me to."

With surprising quickness Mr. Morris rose, opened the drawer of the table, and took out a pad of paper and some pencils. With a deftness perfected by practice he slipped the pad under Tecla's left hand and placed a pencil in her right. She herself made no motion whatever beyond the slight muscular response of grasping the pencil. Mr. Morris sat down again.

For several moments there was absolutely no sound or movement in the patio. The three figures which peopled it might have been under an enchantment—an enchantment which despite the loveliness of the moonlight and the sweetly stirring air held something ominous.

Gradually Tecla's eyelids lowered and closed. Her face grew stone-like in its immobility. Her right hand began to jerk almost imperceptibly. At first the jerks were short and spasmodic, the pencil making a series of meaningless lines. Half a page was covered with them. Mr. Morris, his gaze fixed upon the sheet of paper, detached it without interrupting the rhythm of the moving pencil. Upon the second sheet the lines became letters. The letters were formed into words. Mr. Morris devoured these words.

"Darling—there is no use pretending I am happy here. I

will never be happy until you are with me. I know I should be weaned away from all earthly loves and ties by now, but I'm not. After all, why should I be when my love for you isn't earthly—or at least only partly so—but comes from what is most immortal in me and finds its home in what is most immortal in you. I puzzle and puzzle over what can be holding you in the world you remain in. I cannot imagine what there is there for you to do or to enjoy. Everything you have on earth can be left there for those who want it. There are greater riches and higher pleasures here where I am than you can dream of in your present state. I will show them all to you and teach you all I have been learning during this period of our separation. Then together we will press on and learn things more glorious than I can express to you through this medium. I love you—come—come to me . . .”

The pencil stopped.

Tecla's eyes were still closed and she was breathing slowly and deeply as if asleep as Mr. Morris detached the page and, folding it, slipped it into his pocket. The fanaticism which had so dreadfully transformed his face dimmed. Gradually his features became normal except for a heaviness about the eyes as might follow an anæsthetic or a light drug. Thus the three were held unmoving in the patio for a space of time which was of different duration and significance to each.

It was Tecla who, opening her eyes, broke the unhealthy hush.

“Was I able to write anything intelligible?” she asked in her usual agreeable voice. She drew her fingers across her forehead as she spoke, becoming fluid and feminine in her face, her figure, and her light interrogation.

“More than intelligible—precious. Thank you, my dear.”

"I'm glad. Dick, you lazy-bones, tell Fernando to bring us something to drink!"

Dick's return to reality had in it nothing more mysterious than the willingness of an empty-headed man to comply with almost any suggestion. He disappeared into the kitchen to return shortly followed by Fernando, whose household duties had commenced with roasting coffee at six that morning and were now being concluded by cracking ice at eleven o'clock at night.

The three people in the patio sipped their drinks and chatted cheerfully. Mr. Morris invited the Fenns to have dinner with him at the Empire Hotel the next evening.

"Come early. Be there at seven-thirty. Shall I invite anyone else? Shall we have a party?"

"Whatever you wish," Tecla said.

"A party would be fun," said the sociable Dick. "But anything that suits you and Tecla suits me."

It was midnight before Mr. Morris took his departure, helped into his topcoat by Dick, and the Fenns were alone together. Dick indulged in the luxury of a yawn and a stretch. Tecla stood quite still, her brows knitted in something less than a frown and something more than a passing thought.

She was looking at the cheap little house she had by cleverness, hard work, and shrewd bargaining contrived into a home and a charming one. Not too much Indian embroidery—just enough to give colour; not too many crudely carved pieces—just enough to give character. Everything Tecla touched—her house, her clothes, the food upon the table, the plants flowering in their hand-made jars—revealed her taste, her sure and dainty touch. She had performed a miracle on Dick's small salary, and she knew it. But tonight she viewed

her handiwork with complete disaffection. Makeshift—all of it: hateful testimony to poverty struggling with gentility. She, Tecla, should have been the mistress of an exquisite establishment. She should be commanding half a dozen first-class servants instead of one overworked *mozo*. She should be owning two smart motors instead of cadging rides in a borrowed car. Oh, she knew how to do it, if she only had the chance! She knew how to dress—really dress, not make something “do.” She knew how meals should be ordered, cooked, and served, not merely patched up to fit a budget. She knew, too, just whom to ask to dinners—just how to charm and blend the groups she would combine.

Her slow gaze took in the *mise en scène* before her, and with every fibre in her fastidious body she resented it: resented the broken arm of the wicker chaise-longue, the faded shade of the lamp. She looked at Dick in his shabby, ready-made suit and felt a cold fury that his ability to wear well-cut clothes should be lost because of his inability to buy them. It was hateful—hateful. She was trapped and she knew it. She began to tap the tiled floor with her foot nervously as she felt the irrevocable meanness of her lot closing down upon her, and then controlled herself. Dignity was one jewel that was left.

“Penny for your thoughts,” offered Dick, smiling at her.

“Why? Because you haven’t any yourself?” she chaffed him.

If Tecla had no illusions about the nice-looking boy she had married because he was gentle and mannerly, because he was going to Guatemala to do something romantic with coffee, because he thought she was as beautiful as she believed herself to be; if she could no longer deny that he would never

make money—that he would never hold any job permanently—she did not blame him. He did not have the traits requisite to business success, but he had the appearance and qualities to succeed socially. If they had a few thousand a year that they could be assured of—if they had even a part of that legacy Mr. Morris's wife had left him almost as soon as she had received it—how delightful their life could be. Mr. Morris didn't need that money—he had plenty of his own besides that. He had never touched either the principal or the interest. He had implied as much to them. If she and Dick . . .

"Well, I may not have any thoughts," Dick was saying, "but I haven't a penny, either," and with a grimace he turned his pockets inside out. Tecla laughed.

"You're lucky to have pockets," she told him. "Plenty of people have lost their shirts lately."

She always kept up the pretence, even with him, that it was the depression or a "bad break" or an accident no one could have foreseen that kept them short.

"I say," suggested Dick, picking up the pencil from the table, "let's us do some writing."

"Us? Me, you mean. No—no more tonight! I've done enough."

"That's what you always say when I ask you," complained Dick. "Do you know you have never done your stuff for me?"

"Haven't I?" Tecla spoke absently. "Well, I will some time."

"I didn't even know you did automatic writing until you began it for Mr. Morris."

"I hadn't done it—not for years. I really had forgotten all about it. I think I'll stop now anyway. It tires me."

"What did you write tonight?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. He took the paper away before I came out of my trance. Let's turn in—I'm dog tired."

She lifted her hand and snapped off the lamp above their heads.

When Tecla came in to the high-ceiled central court which served the Empire Hotel as lobby and lounge, it seemed agreeably airy and spacious after the restrictions of Casa Fenn.

It was only seven o'clock—Mr. Morris and Dick would probably not be there for half an hour—but she had come anyway because she was bored at home: bored with the confines of the small patio made even smaller by huge-leaved plants, lush tropical ferns, and the crowded rows of hanging baskets which held her collection of orchids. Her cramped ménage depressed her: the tiled floors needed repairing; the tinted plaster walls of the bedroom were stained and peeling from the rainy season which had just passed. Tecla loved Guatemala City upon its high plateau, surrounded on every side by abruptly rearing mountains, and sparkling in that cool sunshine which is its perpetual glory. She had, for a long time, loved the tiny Casa which looked out into the street through windows which were barred in the Spanish fashion and set off by sills upon which one could lean for hours and watch the donkeys with their panniers, the oxen with their two-wheeled carts, the Indians in vivid costume trotting by with baskets on their heads, with pigs or pineapples or earthenware upon their backs.

Tecla's sensitive eye and ear had responded to the colour and the sunshine, the laughter and the cheerful clangour of church bells. For one year, for two years, she had been happy to work and contrive, to haggle and hope. It was only when

she could no longer blink the fact that Dick, who had filled her head and his own with grandiose plans of being a great coffee exporter, might at any moment lose even the small clerkship to which he had sunk—it was only then that her fingers lost their nimbleness and her pluck and animation flagged. She saw herself patching together the contemptible family stipend by drilling English lessons into the heads of Guatemalan children. This sordid catastrophe steadily growing clearer, larger, more inevitable, was like a picture from the cinema screen approaching the motionless spectator. Such futility—such waste of all her cleverness—such ruin of her enchantments!

Today the horror had impended so heavily that she had almost run out of the house. Any place was better than that patio where the orchids sucked up the air and the hanging ferns darkened the sunshine.

For a few moments after entering the Empire Hotel she breathed more freely. It was pleasant to be where people were cheerfully gathering for the cocktail hour; pleasant, after the silence of Casa Fenn, to hear the murmur of voices and the tinkle of ice in tall glasses!

She nodded to this woman and to that man. One grew to know the habitués of the Empire Hotel; one grew to know almost everyone in the city after a season or two. She did not, however, join any of the informal little groups. She chose to sit quietly and wait for Dick and Mr. Morris. But although she preferred to withhold herself, she was conscious of the fact that no group beckoned to her to join it, that no person came up to speak to her.

"The women are jealous of me," she told herself contemptuously, "and the men are afraid of the women."

She was fresher and slimmer than any of the wives of the American business men or the German or English importers; prettier, more smartly dressed than even the prettiest of the young Guatemalan señoritas. And suddenly her relief at being among people—even although she felt none to be her friend—changed into hostility against them.

She looked at Archie Dawson—the fourth son of Sir Eric Dawson, who found it convenient to keep this agreeable waster as far away as possible from England. Archie was getting tight as he did every evening and would soon be striking up an acquaintance with any presentable newcomer who looked as if he would accept a drink and offer one in return. By and by Archie would fall asleep in one of the leather arm-chairs.

"Idiot!" thought Tecla angrily. "If I had what he squanders on whisky, I could stop worrying."

She had no use for Archie although she had not forgotten that it was he who had introduced Mr. Morris to Dick and her seven months before when they happened to find themselves at near-by tables. Archie had picked up the gentleman from Boston thinking he looked like a good fellow. On finding he wasn't so good—that is, for Archie's purposes—he had dumped him on the Fenns. It was that very night that Mr. Morris and Tecla had somehow found themselves discussing automatic writing. It was the next evening that Tecla began experimenting.

Her glance dropped Archie and rested on Greta and Hermann Bauer, who had evidently come up to town for a day's shopping and an evening's jollity. The Bauers were Germans who owned and managed one of the most successful coffee *fincas* in Guatemala. Hermann could not be more than

thirty; he was clumsy and argumentative and he was securely established in a lucrative business which he had built up out of nothing but common sense and hard work. Tecla felt irritated whenever she looked at his shrewd plebeian face and at Greta's dowdy clothes. If she and Dick had a quarter of the Bauers' money . . . Carrie Butman interrupted Tecla's reverie and the conversation of everyone else in the lounge by bursting in at this moment to explain that Butt had flown down to Panama that morning and that she was going down that night by boat. Carrie was a good-looking woman of thirty-eight who had obviously been better-looking at twenty-eight and, perhaps too obviously, a "knock-out" at eighteen. For two decades she had trailed a husband who was introducing sanitary garbage cans and patented incinerators into the tropics. She had set up and taken down her Lares and Penates in Honolulu, Manila, Port Said, and Callao, both she and they becoming a trifle battered in the process. Carrie was draped in an African burnous.

"If she were in Algiers she would affect a Guatemalan poncho," thought Tecla disdainfully, and dismissed Carrie as she had the Bauers.

From under her discreetly cast-down lids she eyed a finely featured woman in a chinchilla wrap escorted by two gentlemen in afternoon suits. When the woman looked up, Tecla nodded. The chinchilla-clad lady returned the salutation graciously, and the two gentlemen, rising, put their heels together and bowed. It was the Peruvian Ambassador, his wife, and one of the secretaries from the French Legation.

"They have manners, they have money, they have position," thought Tecla. "They are charming and so are dozens of other people in Guatemala City. There are always visiting

artists and archæologists who have something interesting to talk about. If we had money, I could collect a circle. . . ."

And again her longing turned around and around on itself in a cycle of envy and frustration.

When finally Mr. Morris and Dick pushed through the swinging door, her heart went gratefully out to them—Dick, tall and graceful, Mr. Morris in his immaculate grey. As they entered together, looked around for her and then came immediately to join her, her vanity and loneliness were assuaged. She greeted them with her grave little smile.

"Ah, my dear"—Mr. Morris's elderly eyes held admiration and his elderly voice affection—"I'm afraid we kept you waiting."

"Tecla doesn't mind. She can always sit perfectly still and size people up with the most blood-curdling ferociousness and have a fine time! Can't you, honey?"

"Look out, or I'll size you up sometime," Tecla threatened him, smiling.

"You already have and decided to keep the poor boob because—well, I don't know why. Why do you, Tecla?"

Dick was gently bantering.

"Because you're a dear old goose," she replied. "Mr. Morris, do you realize that you are the most distinguished-looking man in this room?"

"Ah, thank you, my dear. We are never too old to be flattered. And now, let's have—what will you have, Tecla? And you, Dick? Ah, there's Mrs. Butman! Will you join us, Mrs. Butman?"

"Of course I will," Carrie never refused a cocktail, "just hoping someone would be good to me."

"Someone will always be good to you, Carrie," said Tecla,

noticing but not caring that Carrie had not come up to her when she was alone, but had waited until the men appeared.

She felt unexpectedly glad to have another woman join them. She did not like women; she did not like Carrie; but she had been alone with Dick and Mr. Morris so much that any change was refreshing. She felt an absurd, little-girl desire to talk to Carrie and was ashamed of a twinge of regret when Mrs. Butman, dispatching her cocktail, waved good-bye to the lounge at large and dashed out to catch the eight-o'clock boat train. The truth of the matter was that Tecla, suddenly lifted from solitude into a crowd, was stimulated into a super-sensitive awareness of all sights and sounds.

As she sat in the dining-room with Mr. Morris and Dick, she found herself looking at them both with an abnormal clarity and objectiveness, almost as if they were strangers and she was observing them for the first time.

Dick's features were bold and handsome. He had inherited them but not the force which had originally moulded them. His lack of acumen lay like a wavering mist between the face of his forefathers and Tecla's ruthless vision. Dick's expression was the puzzled wistfulness one sees in a dog which cocks his ear and studies the human face above him, endeavouring eagerly and vainly to understand. Mr. Morris's features, on the other hand, were small and regular, held together by a certain tightness both of structure and facial habit—a conventional New England gentleman whose every movement and inflection modestly set forth business ability and personal probity.

Tonight to Tecla's terrible perception these neat, firm features were subtly disarranged, as objects symmetrically placed upon a table are set askew by a twist of the tablecloth. The

repressions of a lifetime had been jarred by seven months of continuous and increasingly intense traffic with unhealthy emotion. In spite of his courteous solicitude for his guests he seemed abstracted and fatigued. In the early days of their acquaintance he had liked to talk to the Fenns about Mrs. Morris, so recently lost, so profoundly missed. As he and Tecla had gone deeper and deeper into their séances, he had ceased these reminiscences compact of simple tenderness and natural sorrow. It was as if he had come to regard his communion with his wife through Tecla's mediumship as something to be indulged in in secret. In short, it was fanaticism which had subtly disarranged those neat, firm features and was driving Mr. Morris farther and farther away from the land of the living to the land of departed spirits.

No one but Tecla had noticed this. In fact, no one noticed Mr. Morris particularly any more, since he had become one of the regular figures at the Empire Hotel where he had a room and where he usually took his meals.

But the morning after this little dinner party a great many people insisted that they had been struck by some peculiarity in his appearance: something he had said or failed to say. The door boy and the desk clerk both remembered that he had gone to his room immediately after the Fenns had left. The chambermaid would remember until her last hour how he had looked when she found him the next morning.

Sunlight not moonlight sank into the patio.

The tiled floor, the rows of flowering plants in their pottery jars, the orchids in their baskets upon the wall, were gilded not silvered as on that evening a fortnight ago when Tecla, Dick, and Mr. Morris had last sat there. Everything was quite

different now. Yet nothing was changed. The old wicker chaise-longue and the table with its two chairs were grouped as usual under the hanging lamp. But never again would the three who had sat there so often move to their seats with the directness of people accustomed to occupy assigned places. Never again would that simultaneous and noiseless arrangement occur, almost as if their roles had been rehearsed, almost as if they were automatically impelled to do precisely what they did in precisely this manner and measure of time.

Tecla was standing on tiptoe before the wall which supported her collection of orchids. She cherished these air plants partly because their parasitic habit fascinated her, partly because—although they are common in Guatemala—the name of orchid still carried for her an association of luxury. She was in white, her pale hair waved around her shapely head. She might have been eighteen and never, in those brief years, known any life beyond the patio walls.

At the sound of the knocker she turned a puzzled but unstartled face first towards the kitchen, from which Fernando popped, and then towards the front door, whither he sped. During the last two weeks there had been callers—many callers—at Casa Fenn—more than in all the previous years put together. She had thought that the last scandalmonger, the last commiserator, had come, been answered, and gone. At the sound of Carrie Butman's voice she remembered that this particular runner-up of gossip had been away ever since that evening at the Empire Hotel.

"My dear," Carrie burst in breathless, "I'm just back—just this minute off the train! I haven't even been to my own house. I felt I must come to you first—must come the very instant I arrived! Now tell me—do tell me everything."

Tecla waited until the other had paused for breath, dragged up a chair, and perched herself upon it. Then Tecla herself sat down, composedly and with an air of courteous attentiveness.

"What have you heard? Where do you want me to begin?" she asked.

"Only what reached us at Panama. Everyone thought everyone else had written fully, I suppose. I know he was found dead the very morning after I left, in his room at the Empire Hotel I heard, discovered when the maid came up with his early coffee and that he . . . he . . ." Carrie hesitated.

"Yes, he committed suicide." Tecla spoke the words steadily. "A box which held cyanide was on the table with two letters, one to the hotel people apologizing for any trouble he was causing them and settling up his account, the other to Dick and me. I suppose you've heard what was in that?"

Carrie looked properly distressed but interrogative. Tecla with a half-smile went on.

"I'll tell you exactly and then you'll know. There is nothing secret about any of it. I would rather people knew the truth so that they won't need to guess or make up stories. Mr. Morris had been to a lawyer—to Robert Hinden—that very afternoon and made his will. He left his house and all its furnishings and everything personal that had belonged to his wife to her sister—Miss Lilian Adams in Boston. He made a number of small bequests to various old friends and distant relatives. Everything else—practically the entire amount which had come to him from his wife ten months ago—he left to Dick and me. It is a very large sum."

She stopped.

Carrie achieved a facial contortion by which she meant to

express that she was grieved at Mr. Morris's demise and rejoiced at the Fenns' good fortune. All she said was: "My dear!"

Slim and still, Tecla sat looking at her hands clasped before her on the table.

"This sister-in-law—Miss Adams—have you heard from her?"

"Yes, we cabled her at once, telling what had happened and asking what her wishes were. She cabled back immediately to send the body to Boston, which we did. We learned afterward from the post office that Mr. Morris had sent her a registered letter and package by air mail that same afternoon. I imagine it was the ruby pin, the ring, and watch that he always carried, as we could not find these anywhere. But we have heard nothing more from her. That is all there is to tell."

"But why should he do such a thing?" Carrie Butman fairly goggled at Tecla. "He seemed so well, and if not exactly hilarious, certainly not unhappy. If I've told Butt once, I've told him a dozen times that I had never known Mr. Morris more agreeable than he was that evening. What do you really think was the reason?"

Tecla shook her head.

"I've told you all the facts. Everyone has a right to a theory about it. I won't deny that I have mine. But that concerns no one but myself."

Carrie comprehended reluctantly that this was the end of the information she was to receive. She made a little conversation about her trip to Panama, declared she was "worn out, my dear—absolutely worn out," and went.

With the closing of the front door, Tecla dismissed the interruption from her mind. She had other things far more ab-

sorbing to think about than Carrie Butman. Tecla was plunged into plans and schemes—intoxicated by them. The shoddy little Casa Fenn had already faded from her consideration. There was an ancient palace on the Paseo la Reforma whose *corredor* was supported by pillars of carved cedar, in whose spacious patio the long-stopped fountain could be made to leap again. There were brocades waiting to be purchased and hung upon the walls. There were Spanish chests and low carved tables; there were oil paintings in frames of gold waiting to be discovered, bought, and given a regal setting in Tecla's and Dick's new home.

"You must come down some time and visit us in Guatemala," she would say to carefully culled acquaintances in New York when she ran up there twice or thrice a year to buy her clothes, to hear the opera, and to make an entrance into some drawing-room where she had once been snubbed or ignored. "We've an old *palacio* down there—belonged to one of the *Conquistadores* three hundred years ago—frightfully shabby but quite adorable. . . ."

So extraordinarily real was this day-dream that, when Dick came home, he merely stepped into it and moved through it as a part of the fantasy. His admiring gaze served, as it would always serve, for a mirror in which Tecla never tired of seeing herself, since the image it reflected reinforced her self-confidence.

As they sat in the patio after dinner, Dick in the old chaise-longue blinking up at the sky, a magazine idly held in his fingers, Tecla included him in a sort of half-fierce, half-maternal satisfaction in her rosy survey of the future.

The future? The future was already here! She was living in it now! Already she was mistress of the manner of life, the

quality of possessions and adventures, she was peculiarly fitted to handle and enjoy. She who had so often gazed in impotent despair at the prospect before her, who had seen as one sees upon the cinema screen the image of indigence emerging, bearing down upon her, growing steadily larger, more paralysing, now saw that image as a vast unfurling flower overcoming her with its fragrance, enveloping her in its orchid petals.

For the second time that day the knocker of the door sounded. For the second time Fernando hurried to open it. But Tecla did not even look around. There was no one whose entrance would require the gathering up, the sustained manipulation of her powers. Not until now, when it was successfully completed, had she fully realized the strain of that long casting, playing, angling, and final reeling in of the giant fish which carried in its mouth the gold coin of her fortune. Not until now had she permitted herself the reward of the sportsman who, having striven dangerously, regards with a satisfaction which is unvitiated by pity as it had been unactuated by personal animosity the trophy at his feet.

No, she had no need to look up, whoever knocked at the door—whoever came. The last inquiry had been answered this afternoon when Carrie Butman had taken her departure.

Señor García, who was shown in by Fernando, stood in the doorway, polite, deprecating, somewhat important. Dick rose to welcome him.

The Fenns knew Señor García as they knew everyone in Guatemala City; knew him to bow to, to exchange a few words with when they met in the lobby of the Empire Hotel. Señor García was Director General of Police and Dick had already had a conference or two with him concerning certain

details about Mr. Morris. This call was doubtless to clear up some last small business.

Tecla, acknowledging the caller's greeting, rose to leave the two men together, but Señor García raised a protesting hand. If Señora Fenn would be so good—his business was with her even more than with her husband—he had a disagreeable duty—they must pardon both his mission and his Spanish for, as they knew, he had no English. However, he would do his best. If Señora Fenn would remain? Would be seated?

Tecla sat down.

Señor García looked very uncomfortable. He took a paper from his pocket but hesitated to show it. There was, it seemed, a lady in Boston, a sister-in-law of Mr. Morris—Miss Lilian Adams—Señor and Señora Fenn perhaps knew of her?

Yes, they knew of her.

It was unfortunate—he touched the paper—but Miss Adams was making trouble. Miss Adams—this was merely his, Señor García's private opinion—might be angry that Mr. Morris's fortune, which had come to him from his wife's father who was also Miss Adams's father—

Dick interrupted.

"But Miss Adams has no grievance! She received precisely the same amount as Mrs. Morris did from the father's estate. Abogado Hinden says Mr. Morris's will is absolutely valid. They went into it most carefully. Mr. Morris specified that Miss Adams was to have the Boston house and all the furnishings and everything personal that had belonged to Mrs. Morris. He made bequests to a number of his old friends and distant relatives. What he left to us he had a perfect right to dispose of as he saw fit."

Señor García looked unhappy. Unfortunately it was not a question of money. Miss Adams had received a letter and a package from Mr. Morris written the afternoon before his death. The package contained certain pieces of jewellery. The letter, in which he explained that he was soon to die, enclosed another purporting to be from his dead wife, but unfortunately in Señora Fenn's handwriting. It was this letter which was causing all the trouble. In short, Miss Adams was sending two men by plane from the United States to extradite the writer of the letter. He, much to his regret, was forced now to serve this warrant of arrest upon Señora Fenn.

"Arrest Tecla!"

Dick's amusement was touched with indignation.

"I can see that the sister-in-law might try to break the will. I've been more or less prepared for a lawsuit of some sort. But that doesn't necessitate an arrest."

Unfortunately it did in this case.

"On what grounds, in Heaven's name?" demanded Dick.

Señor García cleared his throat uncomfortably. He did not look at Dick. Instead he unfolded the paper and, as if he were puzzling it out for the first time, merely murmuring the syllables aloud to make their meaning clear to himself, recited impersonally: ". . . for suggestion and covert influence inciting, with malice aforethought, James Morris to commit suicide . . ."

Dick snatched the paper and stared incredulously at the word which Señor Gracia had avoided.

"Murder! Tecla arrested for the murder of James Morris!"

But Tecla, who had risen, was not looking at the paper or at Señor Gracia or at her husband. Her eyes were fixed, as

upon a screen from which an image gradually enlarging, growing more hideous, more unescapable, was bearing down upon her!

Murder! Was that the name for what she had done? The image was pressing closer. Only one weapon could deflect this horror which would otherwise devour her—innocence! And in her hand was guilt.

Mechanically, her face like a grey stone, she took a few steps forward—towards Señor Gracia—towards the paper—as one who walks without redemption to her doom.

IMAGES OF THE
TIERRA FRIA

▼

“Thou seest how few the things are, the which if a man lay hold of, he is able to live a life which flows in quiet, and is like the existence of the gods; for the gods on their part will require nothing more from him who observes these things.”

▼



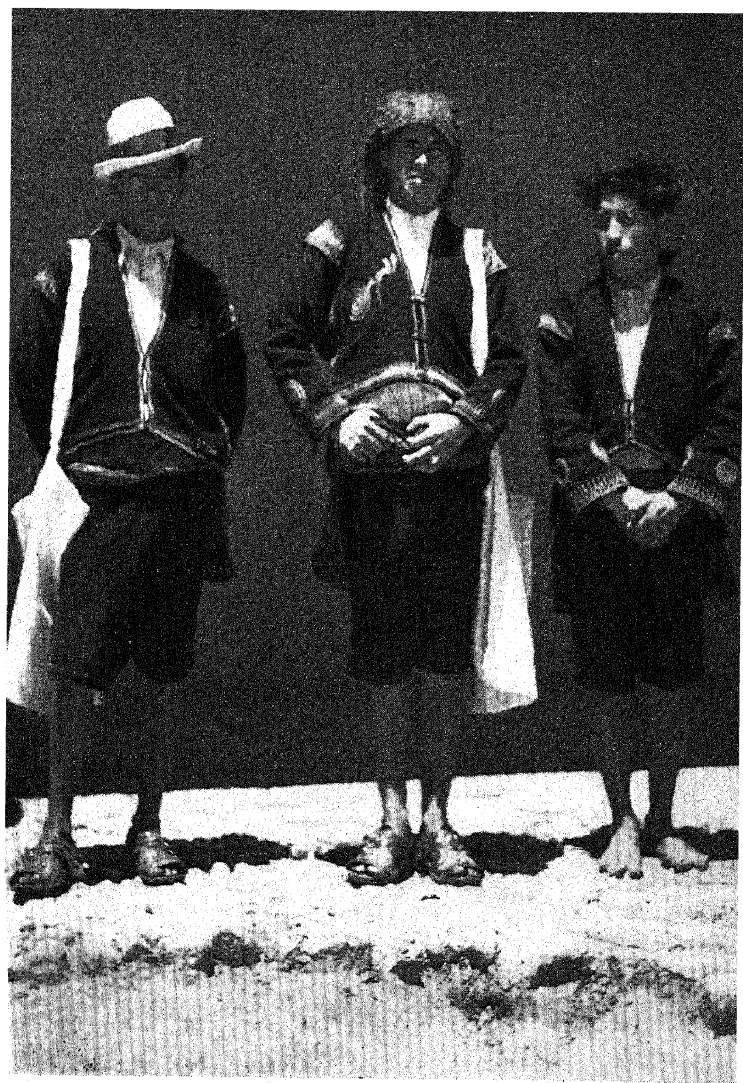
Lake Atitlan lies in a crater bowl—one of the astounding
vistas of the world.



One short street stuck on the practically vertical side of a mountain.



Black woollen breeches, curved and slit at the knee, with embroidered pocket flaps and a black bolero, are fashioned only in Chichicastenango.



The aboriginal inhabitants of the mountains still wear the costumes which each man weaves, embroiders, fringes, and tassels for himself.



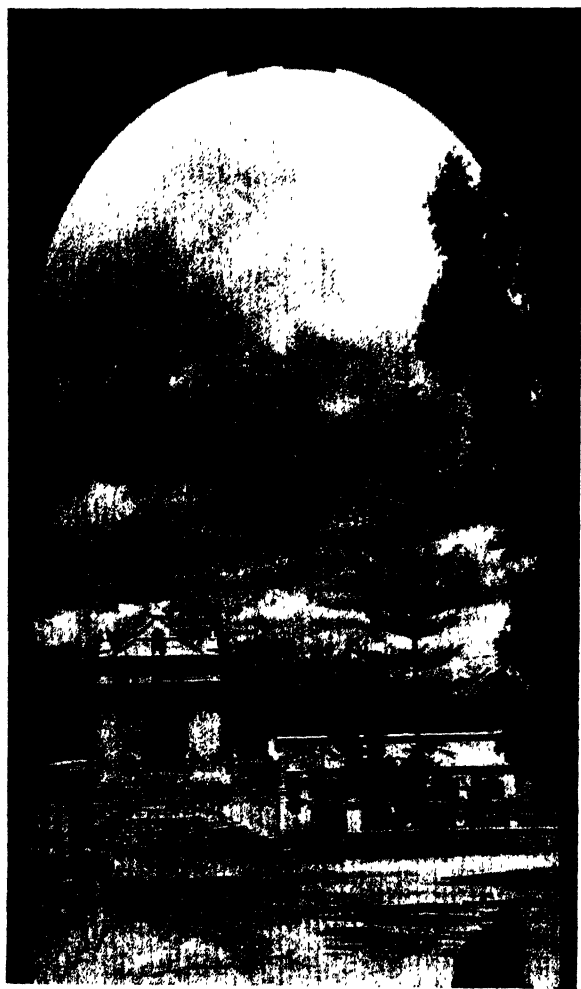
The skirts are long or short, striped or solid in colour according to the local feminine fashion.



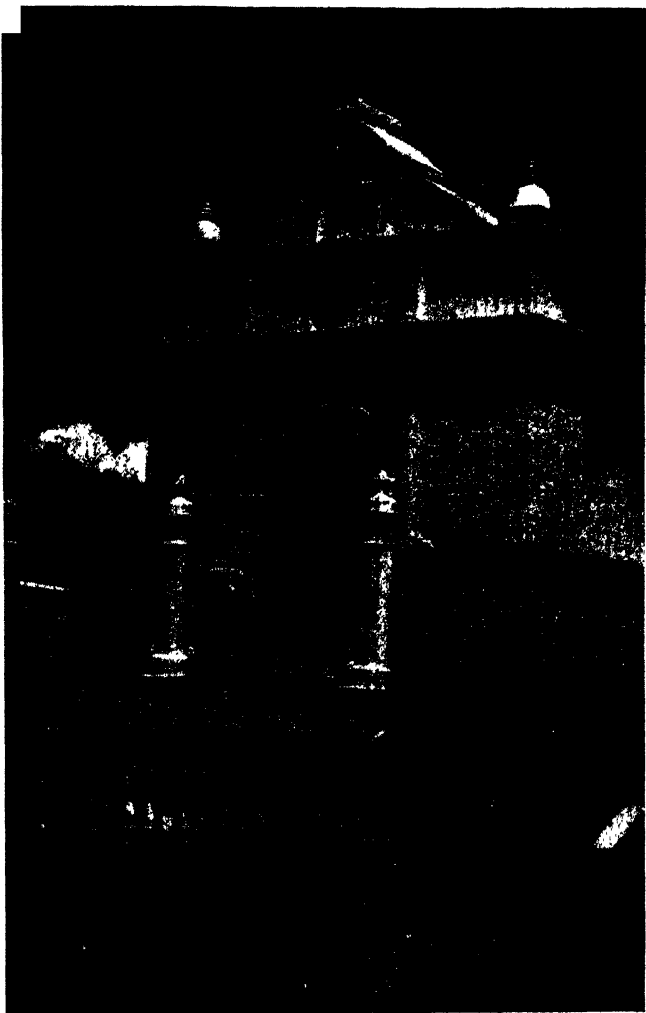
Children old enough to stand do not climb into the maternal lap.



For four centuries the Church of Santo Tomás,
Chichicastenango, has stood opposite the chapel
of El Calvario.



Church and chapel are raised by flights of stone steps, so that they seem to hold the plaza between them, as two white hands on either side a precious object.



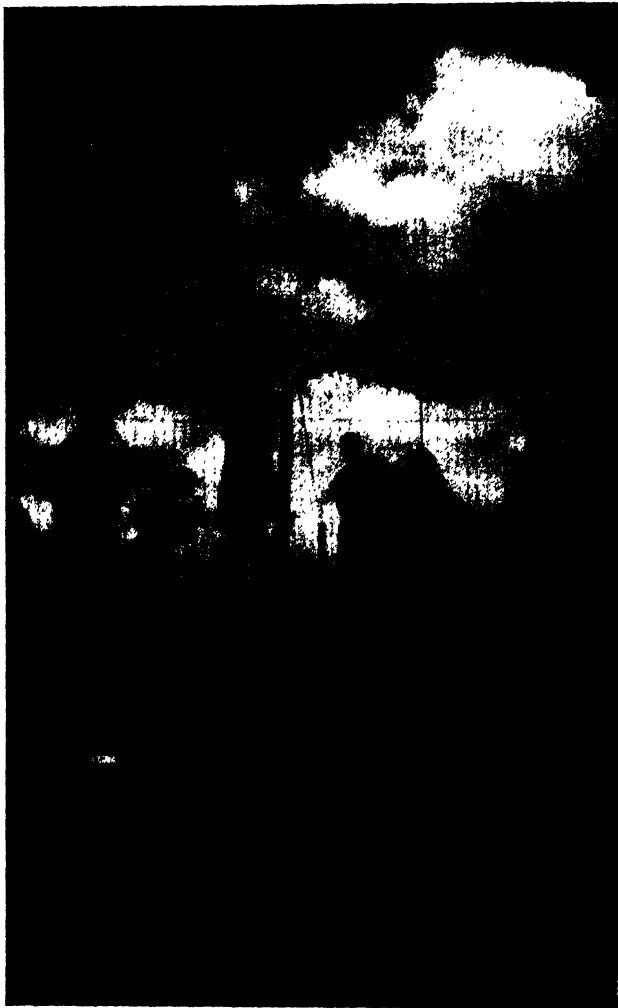
Religion is the most important, the most joyful part of their lives. It is integral in every deed and thought.



Brightly clad Indians who are kneeling in scattered groups
before the door of Santo Tomás.



The Church of Santo Tomás, with its finely severe yet charming façade.



With complete unself-consciousness they are praying out loud
with heads bowed and hands upraised.



IMAGES OF THE TIERRA FRIA



THE mountains, topped with cloud, whirl higher and higher—breakers of green, flinging their surf upward to the sky. The white crests are cold; the green troughs between are cold, even when they glitter in the sunlight. Although the crowding ranks of cones—truncated, pointed, rounded, shattered into lesser peaks—are as static as geometric forms upon a colossal chart, the mists that race, the clouds that tear across their spuming summits give the impression of violent movement.

No railways pierce this region. That filament which wavers

along the sliding precipice is the only roadway. It seems as unstable as a festoon of foam, formed, disintegrated, and formed again on a sliding watery wall. This is the *tierra fría* of Guatemala—the cold country.

Tiny figures, brilliant as prisms of ice, glint on the ascending and descending runnel. Occasionally a swaying ox cart crawls around a spiral. Occasionally a donkey makes part of a caravan. But as a rule the Indian, whether alone or in company, trusts to his own legs for covering ground and prefers his own back as a carrier. And here, amid these abrupt heights and crashing depths, he is in his unique domain. If an infrequent motor car wheels around the precipice, the native, trotting down from his eyrie with a load of henequin rope or hammocks to sell, swerves to one side without turning his head. A group of them, squatting gipsy-like about a fire by the side of the road, their earthen drinking-bottles beside them, their machetes at their belts, are indifferent in accepting or returning the traveller's salutation.

The aboriginal inhabitants of the mountains still wear the costumes which each man weaves, embroiders, fringes, and tassels for himself. Every region has its own jealously preserved and distinctive cut and colour. A brown-checked blanket worn like an apron marks the man from Solalá, although he may be met a hundred miles away. Black woollen breeches curved and slit at the knee, with embroidered pocket flaps and a black bolero harking back to Andalusian Conquistadores, are fashioned only in Chichicastenango. The warrior from San Pedro works upon his full white cotton trousers rows of conventionalized animals and men in bright wool. The women from Santiago wear their *rebosas* across one shoulder and twist a headdress like a coronet around their hair.

These costumes are their own. These patches of scrupulously tended cornfields are their own. These adobe dwellings thatched with leaves—precise replicas of those Alvarado discovered three centuries ago when he pushed his cruel way into this region—these, too, are their own. Sometimes the ever-inquisitive white man, peering down a side path or scratching away the bushes before a half concealed grotto, is confronted by a crude stone image, contemptuous in its calm. A man-made god, an idol with recent offerings of maize and candles placed upon the ground in front of it—the whole thing a reprehensible symbol of paganism in the enlightened twentieth century—this, too, is the Indians' own.

The plaza, the Catholic church, the Ayuntamiento, which mark the centre of each town, speak of Spain. So do the houses, their double doors flush upon the street, their windows with iron or wooden grilles concealing patios whose *corredores* are hung with baskets of fern. But such closely built segments, inhabited chiefly by white men and *ladinos*, are merely flecks in that savage sweep of reft and ridge. They are separated from one another by waterfalls that pitch headlong over cliffs, by lakes deep as the ocean, which lies hundreds of miles away and thousands of feet below.

As the lowland Indian maintains his equilibrium in the vortex of the jungle, so does his highland brother adapt himself to the sleet and storm of the mountains. His chest is deep to breathe the rarefied air; his thighs are muscular to climb. He does not conquer the elements, but he is not defeated by them. Even a volcanic eruption does not daunt him. Before the falling ashes are cold, he is back to scratch his cornfield and rebuild his tumbled walls.

A few white men also brave these primal rigours—the

archæologist, the priest, the travelling salesman. All of these return to civilization with thoughtful eyes, for it is sobering to face the stark elements.

There was one white man, however, who was not vulnerable to Guatemala, parrying her extravagant onslaughts with a peculiar weapon: Hamilton Shields, known to his intimates as Tony.



TONY



HE did not look his twenty-nine years. As a matter of fact when McAndrew first saw him sauntering across the hotel lobby with his bright blond hair and his expensively casual clothes, he took him for a college boy. There was that levity in his bearing, that nonchalance in his movements, which we associate with youth and irresponsibility. It was only after he had talked with him about the projected trip to the Quiché region, for which McAndrew was to be his guide, that the latter realized with distaste that Hamilton Shields's blank eyes with their

long curling lashes did not correspond with his boyish mouth. And his cultivated voice vibrated to a slack timbre which McAndrew interpreted unflatteringly.

Of course McAndrew was the last man in Guatemala who should have been forced to spend a week in Tony's company. McAndrew was hard-boiled, a Scotchman out of luck and grateful for the temporary job offered by the Travellers' Agency. He had lived in Guatemala for a dozen years, knew the country more or less, even spoke a little Quiché and would be able to point out the chief natural and historical points of interest and to arrange for accommodations in a region not yet organized for tourists. Although his tweeds were shabby, both they and the manner in which he wore them testified to standards which Mr. Hamilton Shields approved. Not that this affected the latter's impulsive decision to stay over in Guatemala until the next Grace liner in two weeks. But there are certain advantages in having as a companion—even if he is merely a guide hired through a tourist agency—one who is more or less of a gentleman.

His smile implied as much as, over a cocktail, he and McAndrew discussed the general plan and some details of the projected expedition. If his eyes maintained that stony indifference which the other had so immediately and unpleasantly noted, this was because, despite his superficial sparkle, Tony was, fundamentally, completely indifferent to McAndrew and to everyone in the world except himself.

Tony lived for the sole purpose of amusing Tony. He had always had plenty of money and made no pretence of doing anything but enjoy it. To the moral precept that no one can devote himself exclusively to diversion and not be bored, Tony offered himself as a refutation. He wasn't in the least

bored—ever. At this moment he was looking forward with almost naïve pleasure to the novelty of a jaunt through the Indian country of Guatemala.

"I want the best car and the biggest you can get, you understand," he told McAndrew, "and if the Indian chauffeur you mention needs someone to spell him, get hold of another. I don't care if the roads are rough, and I can sleep in a hard bed as well as the next fellow."

McAndrew nodded.

He inferred correctly that Tony prided himself on his physical fitness, although he was more accustomed to displaying this asset on the tennis courts of the Riviera or the beaches of the Lido than on the volcanic slopes of a practically virgin country. McAndrew also cynically comprehended that an egotist will endure surprising discomforts so long as they are part of a deliberately sought sensation. No, he did not care for Tony at all, and only the fact that Bessie McAndrew, his wife, and Jean McAndrew, his small daughter, must be tided over somehow until the insurance business in Guatemala City revived kept him from then and there throwing up his agreement with the Travellers' Agency.

Of the first part of their trip McAndrew never had anything particular to report. His companion chattered as incessantly as a schoolgirl. He exclaimed over the scenery and the costumes and displayed the excess of social sophistication and the paucity of solid education usual to the spoiled and idle children of the rich. He bought everything that took his fancy, and they stayed over in Antigua an extra day to arrange for shipment of pottery, rugs, fabrics, and half a dozen Spanish colonial chairs to the United States. Tony, who did not hesitate to indulge any whim of his own, was exacting in regard

to expenditures by McAndrew. He watched the tips sharply and kept accurate account of the gasoline consumed, since it was agreed that he was to pay for this. But he was never disagreeable. On the contrary, he exhibited a buoyancy which most people would have declared charming but which exasperated McAndrew. The Scotchman, born serious and sobered by hard experience, could not believe that any human being could be as utterly trifling as his companion appeared.

"Something'll bring him up with a short haul before he's through," thought McAndrew grimly.

They jounced over a terrific bump in the road and Tony's blond head knocked smartly against the top of the car. He laughed like a child delighted with a new game.

To penetrate into the interior wildness of Guatemala is to mount up—up into the zenith of the sky. Down and then up and up and up again. . . . Peaks crowd across the road, and the car dodges around them, and in so dodging it hangs on the edge of a fissure that splits the very globe asunder. The car crawls and coasts and doubles on its tracks, and into whatever direction it points and from whatever angle it emerges, the triangle of Agua with its plumed cone places itself against the sky with magic immediacy.

After an interminable stretch of bucking and careening the wild road quiets down. It proceeds docilely between green banks which serve as blinders to shut out the exhausting arena. It submits to their restraint and turns, at a pedestrian amble, down a shade-dappled foot path. At the end of the path it leaps into eternity! It drops into space! Lake Atitlan, blue, purple, lavender, lies in a crater bowl a thousand feet

below. . . . It is one of the astounding vistas of the world.

McAndrew had come out upon this translucent void many times before and he was not a man of facile emotions. But today, as always, its sheer incredibility stunned him.

After a few moments he glanced at his companion.

Tony, his bright hair rippled by the breeze, his lips parted in their ready smile, stood upon that rim which sweeps for more than half a hundred miles between the sky and the water.

"It's awfully pretty, isn't it?" he remarked in his slack voice.

McAndrew did not even nod. He turned on his heel. As well expect exaltation in a louse.

McAndrew had not planned to stay over night in Zacunango. This settlement, consisting of one short street stuck on the practically vertical side of Mount Zacu, had nothing to offer of either comfort or interest. But the only road traversible by motor ran through it, and a violent sleet storm in mid-afternoon decided McAndrew to venture no further that day along the narrow ascending pass.

There was something about the storm, a breathlessness in the air, an explosiveness in the thunder like a subterranean bombardment, which McAndrew did not like. The white sleet bore ominous resemblance to a fall of ashes, and the column of vapour rising from the top of Mount Zacu seemed higher and denser than usual.

One of the houses in the street claimed, by its sign, to be a hotel, and McAndrew found that the two bedrooms which made up its accommodation were available. However, before coming to an arrangement with the proprietor, he sought out

Tony, who was disdainfully poking with his cane at the lumps in the mattress.

"What do you say to clearing out of here?" asked McAndrew.

"Suits me. Next place couldn't be worse."

"I mean, turning back."

"What for?"

"Zacu might stage a blow-out. The landlord agrees with me it seems a bit uneasy."

"Does it do that often?"

"Doesn't have to do it often. Once would be enough for us."

"I mean, is this particular volcano in the habit of erupting?"

"Most volcanoes have the habit. Of course there may be a century or two between eruptions. Our landlord tells me Zacu hasn't exhibited any activity since 1790. But that doesn't mean it may not get restless tonight."

"Oh, I guess not." Tony gave the cot a final test by lying down on it and stretching out. "This isn't as awful as it looked. Might as well tell Juan to bring in my luggage."

"I advise turning back while we can," repeated McAndrew.

"Well, I won't accept your advice. And do, like a good fellow, ask the landlord, who looks as if he might also be the cook, to boil the chicken—not just dip it in warm water and take it out again. It was awful at that place we stopped last night—practically raw."

McAndrew did not bother to tell the landlord because during the last moment a peculiarly disagreeable earth tremor had decided him that neither he nor Tony should be in Zacunango at dinner-time.

He went out to hunt up the chauffeur and tell him that

they were starting back. To be sure, it was far from safe to motor in the gathering darkness along a mountain road which might be overwhelmed at any moment by a landslide. Furthermore, if Zacu did get lively, they would be practically as exposed to danger anywhere on the road as here. Finally, he reflected, he would probably lose his job with the Travellers' Agency if the tremors turned out to be a false alarm and he brought Mr. Hamilton Shields back to Guatemala City against his order and four days before he wanted to return.

Accepting all these possibilities, McAndrew grimly started to find Juan. He went first to the kitchen, but there was no one there—not even the landlord-cook. He went out into the street to look for the nearest *cantina*. The car stood outside the door. If he did not find Juan at once, he would simply force Tony into it and himself drive it back to Atitlan. And then he saw Juan and the hotel keeper and the entire population of Zacunango in a paralysed group staring at the volcano. Just as he caught sight of them, they scattered and began to run, pell-mell, some in one direction, some in another, so quickly that their screams and gestures of warning were lost in the distance they put between themselves and the village.

McAndrew took one look at Mount Zacu, whose top was now entirely covered by a vaporous smoke, and in that moment he saw a wide black stream rolling down the mountain side directly towards the settlement.

In one leap he was in the hotel and in another in Tony's room. That young gentleman, who had closed his eyes preparing for slumber, now opened them irritably.

"Scram!" yelled McAndrew, yanking his charge off the cot.

"What's the matter?" Tony wriggled himself free from the rude grasp.

"Lava! Coming straight for us! A river of it! We've got to beat it. . . ."

"For heaven's sake!" Tony was very much surprised. "Wait until I get my hat."

"You damned fool—the volcano's erupting—stay here if you want. I'm going."

"Wait a minute. I'll go with you."

Tony did, incredibly, pick up his hat and put it on his head. He even cast a hasty look around and picked up a fresh handkerchief from the pile on the bureau. McAndrew was livid.

When they reached the street, it was entirely deserted.

"Is that lava?" asked Tony, pointing to the black line creeping down the mountain side.

Smoke unfurled before it in dense puffs. The smoking track behind was broken here and there by flames. These were not shooting up from the lava itself, as McAndrew first thought, but were large trees which were burning before they toppled. All the smaller trees and bushes were flattened out and covered by the steadily approaching deluge.

McAndrew did not bother to reply to Tony's inquiry.

He was standing undecided which way to go.

Instinct prompted return: back towards Atitlan and towards Guatemala City half a hundred miles away. But it was entirely possible that the purgatorial inundation would sweep across the road before they crossed, or even at the moment while they were crossing, into safety. They might be surer of avoiding it by going east. By now there was not a single moving creature anywhere to indicate which way had been taken by the inhabitants of Zacunango. As he recalled it,

they had simply scattered in all directions. It was possible that some of them had already been overtaken.

He stared at the writhing serpent whose gaseous breath was sickeningly perceptible in his nostrils. And even as he stared, it became double-headed. Two streams came boiling towards them, one to the right and one to the left. Whichever way they fled now, they would be in the direct path of destruction.

"By Jove," said Tony, "I believe right here is the only safe place!" He looked at the forked sluice with a pleased surprise. "Funny how it separated just at that point."

McAndrew made no reply.

The smoke was thicker now; the explosion and rumble of subterranean thunder more frequent. They could hear the crackle of the burning trees.

"Do you propose standing here and letting yourself be cooked?" he heard himself asking.

Tony rejoined: "I don't see why we should stand. I'm going to sit down and watch the fireworks." And he sat down on a doorstep.

The two streams were proceeding more rapidly than had the single one, although from where he stood McAndrew found it impossible to calculate their speed, their width, or their future course. At the moment it seemed as if Tony were right. The safest thing was not to attempt to cross in front of either flow, but to remain in the area between. But to stand inert in a street crazily shaking on the side of an erupting volcano was a violation of natural instinct. Their hideous dilemma was emphasized by the fact that they two were alone in a village which, fifteen minutes before, had been swarming with people. Where were those fleeing men and women and

children now? It was not beyond probability that they were already cut off or even engulfed by one of the burning bands. For the double stream had now completely surrounded the village. There was no longer any sense wondering which was the best way to escape. There was no escape except over the face of the precipice.

The flows were close enough for one to see bubbles and streamlets of fire on the crinkling black surface. Tiny fountains of flames plopped into the air. Ashes were falling so thickly that McAndrew wondered how long it would be before they set fire to the thatched roofs. Now that he had accepted inaction, he was conscious of a strange exaltation. The tremendous convulsion, the awful display, struck from him all personal emotion. He felt as if he, too, were an incandescent particle in the black void. Perhaps it was the gas which was making him light-headed.

He heard Tony speaking: "You know, I believe those two streams are coming together again. What do you think, McAndrew?"

McAndrew was not at this time capable of thought. He felt, he saw, he heard, but he could not think. However, he agreed. After half an hour's strained staring at the two encircling flows he was still forced to agree. They had separated in such a way that they had avoided the settlement. After passing it, they had rejoined once more into a single river which was cascading over the edge of the precipice. By a mere freak Zacunango had escaped destruction. But it was completely isolated, and he and Tony were the only people in it.

Twenty-four hours later, as McAndrew studied the position of the two smouldering barricades which so incredibly en-

compassed their *pied de terre*, he was again forced to agree with Tony that they were in the only practicable spot. The lava had ceased to flow. Unless some renewed activity broke out, they were safe.

It seemed that no such activity would be renewed. For, although the ashes were still falling and although the column of smoke rising from the crater was still—as well as he could distinguish through the lurid murk—dense and disturbed, the rumbling and tremors had entirely stopped. In all probability the cataclysm was over. While it was impossible, from this situation, to judge the extent of the damage, McAndrew was inclined to believe it relatively slight. He imagined the newspapers in Guatemala City giving it front page importance for an issue. The papers in the United States would cover it in half a dozen lines. “The volcano of Zacu, believed extinct for over a century, reported active. The small settlement of Zacunango may have suffered from lava flow. No other damage reported.” That would be all.

“But I can’t understand why that idiotic Travel Agency doesn’t start hunting for us,” complained Tony querulously, wandering in from the kitchen with a bottle of wine and a piece of cheese.

“Probably are,” returned McAndrew. “You don’t know what landslides may have blocked the road. And even if they got through, they couldn’t cross over that red-hot lava any more than we can.”

“They could send out a plane,” Tony snapped, sitting down and opening the bottle.

“And where would it land?” asked McAndrew contemptuously. “In a street fifteen feet wide and practically perpendicular, or on smoking lava?”

"Even if it didn't land, it could signal and drop us provisions."

"We've got plenty of provisions. Everything in the hotel, the *cantinas*, and the houses is here, and only you and me to eat it."

"Well, I don't like it," Tony insisted petulantly. "I'm an American citizen and I ought to be rescued. If somebody doesn't do something soon I'll make an awful row when I get back. I'll go to Washington about it."

McAndrew swallowed his cup of coffee and stalked out of the hotel.

Tony had spent all his waking hours of the last twenty-four blaming first one person and then another for his predicament: the meteorological bureau, the manager of the Travelers' Agency and the guide it had provided, the President of Guatemala, and now the government of the United States. He had surveyed a spectacle of sublime terror without being impressed. He had accepted his miraculous escape without gratitude. And now he interpreted the commutation of what had seemed a certain sentence of death in terms of annoyance. If McAndrew had not felt himself responsible for his charge, he would have knocked him over the head like a rabbit.

As it was, he applied himself first to making certain of the supply of water, and then to rigging up a semaphore arrangement on the roof of the hotel by which he could signal to the possible airplane. From the roof he could plainly ascertain the cul-de-sac in which they were loosely but inexorably trapped. Burning barriers cut them off on every side from either escape or rescue.

McAndrew, working on his semaphore, seemed the one prosaic element in that fantastic oasis. In reality the Scotch-

man was in a state of chaos quite in keeping with his setting. He recalled the awful hour of the eruption as the crackling Hour of Doom. He accepted the cessation of the lava flow as Promise of Deliverance. He was outraged by Tony's frivolity. It terrified him, as a blasphemy which might precipitate a final curse.

He stayed away from the hotel until nightfall to avoid contact with his companion. Nothing but a sense of duty forced him back even then. He would have preferred to sleep inside—or outside—a native hut. But even in this island in the air McAndrew still considered himself an employee of the Travelers' Agency and Tony as under his protection.

He found the sole occupant of the hotel clad in an elaborate lounging-suit lying on his bed, reading a novel he had unearthed from one of the various pieces of luggage strewn around the room.

"Where the devil have you been?" Tony was cross. "What's the idea of leaving me to hunt up my own supper?"

"I've been fixing up a semaphore so that, if they do send that plane, we can signal to it."

Mr. Hamilton Shields was somewhat mollified. "Well, I wish you'd make me a cup of coffee. I don't know how to cook. Want a cigarette?" making a gesture of civility.

"No thanks." McAndrew controlled himself. "I'll bring you some coffee."

Afterwards McAndrew never cared to talk about the five days which ensued before the searching plane responded to the semaphore signals. The grandeur inherent in his experience had been corroded by the other's puerility.

"At first I thought the fellow was just too stupid to realize

what it was all about," he said on the only occasion he did give the details of what happened. "Then it occurred to me it might be a pose—some trumpery notion of being nonchalant in the face of danger. Sometimes I wondered if he was so impregnated with the conviction of his superiority that he simply couldn't grasp the idea of any disaster daring to touch him. Perhaps the aristocracy at the time of the French Revolution were like that. I wondered what could happen—if anything could happen—to make him—well—just normal. Funny, the final catastrophe was something I hadn't anticipated at all.

"We were both on the flat roof of the hotel signalling to the plane and trying to catch its signals. It had just dropped a message, and Tony sauntered over in his casual way to where it had fallen.

"I told you there was no sense in getting all hot and bothered,' he remarked as he stooped to pick it up. 'They were bound to send out a search and rescue party of some sort.'

"I didn't say anything. I never spoke to him unless I had to. I was afraid I'd say too much. I remember thinking: 'Maybe his silliness is his idea of being a good sport.' I simply couldn't believe that any human being could be as absolutely trivial as he seemed.

"Just then the chimney—it was one of those old-fashioned round domes like a big beehive—caved in on one side. I suppose it had got cracked in the quake, and quite a sizable stone hit him on the head. He was stooping over to pick up the message and the unexpectedness of the blow made him lose his balance and he went down on his knees. However, he was

up before I could reach him and shaking off the dust. He didn't look as if he had been injured except in his dignity. As usual he began to blame someone.

" 'I'll sue that confounded landlord,' he complained. 'That was a nasty swipe.'

" 'Lucky it didn't lay you out,' I remarked.

" 'I didn't go through a volcanic eruption to be laid out by a falling chimney,' he retorted in his most toploftical manner.

" 'Well, we read the message and began to concoct one to send back, and it must have been twenty minutes later that I saw he was getting pale. I asked him if he felt sick.

" 'I do feel a little dizzy,' he said in a surprised voice, and then I saw he was going to faint. That is, at first I thought it was a faint, but pretty soon I realized it was something different—a sort of coma. Afterwards a doctor explained to me that a cerebral hemorrhage could act that way. At any rate, I couldn't do anything for him. He lay there unconscious and apparently not suffering—just ghastly white and I knew he was dying. I suppose it's my Presbyterian bringing up, but I had a feeling I ought to do something—prepare him, or give him a chance to prepare himself. It seemed horrible for him to go into eternity with his mouth full of complaints.

" 'I took hold of his hand and said distinctly: 'You are going to die. Is there anything you want to say?'

" 'He had been breathing heavily, his eyes closed. He opened them suddenly and stared at me. His expression was one of utter amazement. It was as if he had said: 'How absurd that such a thing should happen to me!'

" 'And then I realized he wasn't breathing. He was dead.'

McAndrew paused.

“Someone asked me once if I had ever seen anything more terrifying than a volcano in eruption. And I said: ‘Yes—an ash—without any heat—without any weight. You can’t destroy it because it is already destroyed.’ ”



SALUTATION



THE Indians of the *tierra fria* are short and compact, and so tightly encased in their embroidered costumes that to strangers they suggest images—terra-cotta images stiffly draped and bound—an impression emphasized by their erectness. The women, in particular, from constantly balancing and carrying jars, baskets, and burdens upon their heads, seem to be in one solid piece. Even when they squat down upon their heels—which is their only way of sitting—even when they bend to dip their water jugs into the village *pila*, they retain this poised inflexibility. The men, tipped for-

ward under enormous burdens upon their backs, move with the rapid precision of mechanical toys.

As if they themselves recognized the resemblance, they are continually fashioning tiny effigies of clay: three-inch women of brown glazed earth, pygmy men with blouses and broad-brimmed hats painted in bright stripes. Sometimes they adapt these grotesques so they may be used as candlesticks or whistles or vessels of some kind. But many, perhaps most of them, are apparently made for the mere fun of the making. Some are humorous, some are obscene, some are charming in composition and whimsical detail. The traveller in Guatemala is captivated by these emblems and buys half a dozen—a dozen—and carries them home where he unpacks them to find that in transit the glaze has chipped off, the water-colour stripes of the costumes have run together, the very clay has crumbled. The figurines, like their living counterparts, do not lend themselves to transportation.

But it is not the men and women, it is not their mimic statues, but a manikin size between which is most unforgettable: those Indian children who, from the time they wear any clothes at all, are dressed identically like adults, and whose very gestures and facial expressions precisely duplicate those of their parents. The softest toddler is wrapped in the same heavily woven stuffs as clothe his elders. The skirt of a two-year-old girl is pulled tight around her tiny hips and held securely in place by a close sash. It is long or short, striped or solid in colour, according to the local feminine fashion. Her blouse is embroidered in the pattern and colours traditional to her birthplace. She carries a *rebosa* precisely like her mother's, only of doll-like dimensions. She is, in brief, a thirty-inch replica of a woman.

As soon as a little girl can walk, she begins to balance objects on her head, and it is a proud day when she is first given a diminutive water jug to carry to the *pila*. As soon as the little boy can grasp it, he acquires a machete—no mimic toy but a bona fide weapon. Outside a schoolroom door are piled the ferocious knives and daggers belonging to the infants within, quite as, with us, mittens are left in the kindergarten cloakroom.

Suckling babies are carried in a shawl slung upon the mother's back, usually so completely concealed, except for an occasional swinging foot which has escaped, that there is absolutely nothing to indicate that the nondescript lump is a living object. The proportion which survives such treatment is hardy indeed. There are other ways to eliminate weaklings than by Teutonic legislation.

This shawl is their sole vehicular experience. As soon as they wriggle out of it, they walk. There are no perambulators or go-carts, no conveyances of any kind. The rare beasts of burden are carriers of freight. Few Indian children outside a town have ever seen a wagon, fewer an automobile. Practically none have ever been farther than their bare feet have carried them. Possibly this is why there is such quietness in their faces, such repose in their movements and their postures. Neither are they subjected to emotional agitation, for demonstrativeness is barred. Children who are old enough to stand do not climb into the maternal lap or sit upon the paternal knee. One sometimes sees them standing, their little heads resting against a parent's shoulder or thigh, perfectly upright, fast asleep.

But although they are not encouraged in babyish dependence, they are trained in politeness. If his elder speaks

to a well-brought-up Indian boy, the urchin immediately steps forward, folds both arms across his breast and bows his bared head, holding it thus until the grown person touches it with his hand.

There is something so affecting in this reciprocal attitude that many a stranger, seeing it for the first time, feels tears rising in his heart and gathering in his eyes as he looks upon the two bright figures, so similar in their restraint, so dissimilar in size. They seem like archaic images symbolizing a spiritual salutation—a blessing from the stronger, received in meekness by the weaker.



ONE LITTLE, TWO LITTLE, THREE LITTLE INDIANS



ONE little—two little—three little Indians—they stood in a row, all dressed alike, all with black braids hanging in front of their shoulders, all with many silver necklaces, all with bare feet. Four, six, and seven years old—their sizes and ages were properly graduated.

Their mother had washed their brown faces, but it was their father—a handsome young fellow in dashing black bolero and knee breeches, folded headdress, and finely worked sandals—who had brought them to the plaza. That is to say, being an indulgent parent, he had permitted them to trot

beside and behind him. They had not said one word during the hour and a half it had taken to cross the cornfields and follow the road from the adobe hut which was home, to the village plaza which was the Great World. They did not say one word now, as they stood in a row: one little—two little—three little Indian girls—waiting for their father to finish his conversation with the white man.

They had seen the plaza several times before. The white man and the huge, fearsome automobile in which he sat—these they had never seen before. Therefore they fastened their eyes upon him and upon it.

The three little sisters were dressed alike and they were also dressed precisely like grown women. A piece of dark-blue cotton cloth was wrapped tightly about their tiny hips, as a skirt. Their blouses were cut and worked according to adult pattern. Over each right arm was folded a carrying-cloth—that inevitable square of embroidered white cotton which serves as a shawl, a bag, a handkerchief, a veil. An Indian woman without a carrying-cloth is as unthinkable as an Indian man without a machete. The oldest sister had embroidered her carrying-cloth in rows of yellow and blue and red ducks. It was about two-thirds full size. The six-year-old's was about half size. The littlest girl had a very little carrying-cloth. They stood in a row and gazed at the white stranger and the black automobile.

Their eyes were clear, their faces as impassive as Buddhas. They stood in absolute immobility upon their small bare feet, waiting for their father to finish talking to the unknown señor. This was not because they were either stupid or afraid, but simply because that is the way the Indian children in Guatemala wait for their elders.

"Well," said the white man suddenly, "suppose you hop into the car and I'll take you over to Atitlan now. We can look at the property and I'll get you back by six tonight."

He spoke in Spanish, which the little girls did not understand. Their father, Juan, answered in Spanish. He said: "Very well, I will come." Then he looked at his daughters, hesitated, looked at the car, and asked politely: "Would Señor permit me to bring my children?"

"*Cómo no?*" replied Señor with a smile. "Plenty of room." Señor had lived long enough in Guatemala to know that three or a dozen children of this species would make no more noise or movement than as many terra-cotta figurines.

Juan murmured a few words in Quiché to the three little girls. He opened the rear door of the car and lifted them in quickly and deftly, shut the door, and he himself took the seat beside Señor. The car started. One little—two little—three little Indians stood bolt upright in a row looking neither to left nor right. They had not been on or in a moving conveyance since they had left their mother's shawl, and they were having sufficient sensation without bothering over the scenery.

They stood, because they did not understand the cushioned seat behind them. They knew how to squat upon their heels, or to lie down upon a straw mat on the ground. But as for lolling—or even sitting—in an automobile—this did not occur to them. They swayed a little as the car, leaving the plaza, bumped over the cobbles. Their father, turning, whispered a phrase in Quiché, and they obediently took hold of the silk rope looped across the front seat and this steadied them.

At the end of two hours they were still standing like three graven images. They had, however, whispered a few times to one another. They had become accustomed to the strange

motion and were looking soberly, but with intense interest, at the country on either side. And then, unexpectedly, appallingly, they were confronted with something entirely terrifying—a great, glittering, flat field of blue! Lake Atitlan! The three little girls gripped the silk rope tighter than ever. This was the first time in their lives they had ever seen the water.

Señor and Juan jumped down from the car, and Juan opened the rear door, lifted his daughters out, and indicated that they were to wait for him down by the shore. Obediently they filed along the path and, reaching the rickety pier, squatted on their heels and stared at the liquid expanse. Sometimes they whispered to each other. This was the most exciting day of their several and combined existences, and they were extracting its full novelty and delight.

By and by their father appeared with some bananas and *tortillas*, placed these provisions before them with an earthen vessel of water, nodded to them approvingly, and then rejoined Señor at the hotel. The three little girls ate, drank, wiped their mouths with their carrying-cloths, and considered the lake. There were several boats tied to the pier, and they turned their eyes upon these. A boat—any boat—was as mysterious to them as an automobile; nay, more so, for had they not ridden in an automobile?

An hour was hardly enough to observe all these astonishing objects, and it was fortunate they still had the familiar sky and the hurrying cumulus clouds to reassure them in the midst of such a conglomeration of surprises.

Yet, in an hour, they were forced to move again. Señor and their father and a strange Indian came out of the hotel. Señor and the strange Indian stepped into a motor boat, and

Juan motioned that they were to do the same. Obediently they wrapped the remaining bananas and *tortillas* in their carrying-cloths and joined their father, who quickly lifted them into the open launch and then sprang in himself. The strange conveyance began to chug and tremble, and before they could find any rope to hold to it had shot out on the water and was moving across it. Señor and Juan were talking; the strange Indian at the wheel was busy. No one paid any attention to the little girls, which was just as well, as it required all their self-possession to face these unanticipated perils and adjust their balance to the tipping and trembling motion beneath their feet.

Lake Atitlan, set so high above the level of the sea, sunk so deep among the mountains, is surrounded by bastions and buttresses, by regiments and battalions of volcanic cones. Upon these steep slopes cornfields are hung like curtains on perpendicular walls, testifying that the Indian, despite all obstacles, follows Voltaire's injunction to cultivate one's garden. Where there are no cornfields, patches of henequin cling to the mountain sides, and out of its strong fibres the natives make string and twine and bags and hammocks.

These mighty folds and ridges, pitching abruptly from tops of the mountains to the edge of the water, effectively separate from one another the villages which surround the lake. It is a common saying that these are named for the twelve Apostles. The fact that there are not twelve of them does not matter.

Owing to their absolute disunion from the rest of Guatemala and from each other, each settlement has evolved its own cut and colour of costume, shape and size of household vessels. Three distinct dialects are spoken in the sixty-odd-

mile circumference of the lake—Quiché, Tzutugil, and Cakchiquel. Legends, too, are segregated. It is only at San Pedro that a dragon is rumoured to slip every year down the mountain side and plunge into the lake—a dragon whose *portrait parlé* is curiously Chinese. Curiously Chinese also is that high, Oriental sing-song which may be heard only in the village of San Pedro.

However, it was not interest in such matters which had brought Señor to this particular village, on this particular morning. There was a piece of land he wished to see, and about whose purchase he wished Juan's advice. The three men and the three little girls climbed together up the single road that led to the thatch-wattle village. Reaching the plaza, which was surrounded by a scattering crowd and noisy with a marimba and fife, their father indicated that they were to wait for him here, and then he, Señor, and the boatman disappeared.

The little girls found no difficulty in getting to the front row of spectators and, once there, composed themselves for a thorough survey.

Near them are seated, under the overhanging roof of the Ayuntamiento, half a dozen musicians in the palm-leaf hats and the loose white cotton drawers embroidered in tiny bright figures unique to San Pedro. The musicians are recognizable enough, even if they are differently dressed than those in the only other plaza the little girls have ever seen. But who are these outlandish creatures moving forward and backward, stamping, scuffling, and bowing? They are apparelled in cockaded hats and puffed sleeves, in shoulder capes of brocade and velvet, in slashed breeches and epaulets! One is

uniformed in black broadcloth trimmed with gold lace, and he dangles a red silk handkerchief from a white-gloved hand. Silver tassels and little bells hang from the fringe of his partner's cloak. Another carries an open umbrella decorated with tufts of feathers. Most bewildering of all, each of these incongruous spectres has long red curls and a staring, blond face with its cheeks painted red and its moustaches painted gold.

Thump—thump—bang and whistle—go the fife and the marimba, and the mummers bow and scuffle, advance and retreat, while two small boys with false bull's heads pulled over to their shoulders butt against each other. The three little girls recognize the bulls, for they have seen the dance of the matador before. But these men with long red curls, with horridly white masks affixed at unnatural angles—our sight-seers gaze at them thoughtfully.

Thump—thump—bang and whistle—the dancers in the laces of Spain, the feathers of Guatemala, the shoes of Boston, Massachusetts, shuffle and stamp, advance and retreat, actors in a mumbo-jumbo which the little girls do not understand. Do they understand it themselves, these San Pedro maskers, mechanically repeating, hour after hour, day after day, the gestures, the genuflections of the Court of Castile? Why should living red men in a village folded away from the rest of Guatemala—from the rest of the globe and all the people on it—celebrate yearly for ten days—for twenty days—with an automatism which seems induced by some hidden hypnotist, the triumph of white Conquistadores dead three hundred years ago?

The admiral bows, the courtiers make obeisance, the tired

little bulls butt and charge and rest and charge again. The monotonous music bangs and whistles. The hot sun beats on the hot dust stirred by the shuffling feet. A few new spectators saunter up; a few of the others drift away. After three weeks of this incessant squeak and thump, of this dust-blurred advancing and retreating, even the most avid audience grows satiated; even the most stoical becomes bored. But the dancers do not stop.

Unreal as a shadow show, spectral as seaweed swaying beneath the waves which roll in—roll out—acquiescing to a tradition they do not question, obedient to a rhythm they cannot resist, these blanched warriors and kings move through their ghast pantomime of “old unhappy far off things and battles long ago.”

The Indian has affixed a white mask over his face; his hands are in white gloves; his body is burdened with hired velvets and tinsel; his gestures mimic, distortedly, a masquerade whose prototype his eyes have never seen. Is this ritual merely a senseless leaping and pounding—a tawdry dressing-up? Is there a more mournful symbolism under the disguise? The dark skin, the black hair, the firm flesh of the last aborigines—are they to disappear not in mockery but in earnest beneath the trappings of the white invader?

As apparitions flitting through a preternatural haze, the Indians of San Pedro stamp and bow, flirt feathered hat and lace-edged handkerchief. Are they echoing a thunder which three centuries ago rolled away and lingeringly disintegrated in the mountains? Are they poignantly presaging their doom?

The three little Indian girls draw their carrying-cloths through their fingers as they consider the mimes, their three little faces as inscrutable as Buddhas.

There is another village on Lake Atitlan, island-like as its disunited neighbours, since it is approached only from the water. The village of Santiago is built on steep volcanic rock. Its black roadways are steps; its dark walls are rock gardens. Against this exotic background feminine forms stand out like figures decorating a frieze. They are tall, supremely graceful, wrapped in long red skirts as tight as flower shards, and back from their foreheads are wound headdresses like haloes.

The three little Indian girls trotted behind their father and Señor, who had business in Santiago.

They had been up at daybreak. They had trotted several miles before they had reached the first plaza where Señor was waiting. They had been caught up in a Plutonian chariot—three voiceless Persephones—and whirled through labyrinths walled by volcanoes. They had seen water; they had been in a boat; they had witnessed white apparitions, bedizened and dusty, dancing in the sun. After more tipping and tilting over more water, here they were in a land where the streets were black, and tall women were dressed as never had women been dressed before. Furthermore, our travellers had eaten all their bananas and *tortillas* and their carrying-cloths hung empty over their arms.

The Señor spoke to Juan in Spanish and Juan spoke to his daughters in Quiché. They were to wait here, in the plaza, until he returned. Being an indulgent parent, before he left them he purchased for each a lump of pink sugar candy. Sucking these morsels of refreshment, the little girls squatted on their heels and looked at the rows of red-skirted, haloed women, also squatting on their heels, each on a straw mat and each with her merchandise spread out on the ground be-

fore her. They were very noisy women. They chattered and screamed and pointed to the intruders who did not understand this unknown dialect. But to squat in the market place under the shadow of a giant cieba tree seemed quite the proper procedure. So they settled themselves, sucking their sweetmeats, until sleep got the better of them after so many and so agitating adventures. The six-year-old and the seven-year-old slept balanced upon their knees and heels, but the four-year-old gradually toppled sideways. By and by she slumbered on the ground.

They slept in the shadow of that antique church whose circular steps make one forgive Spain all her crimes. They slept under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, who stands upon a blue pedestal with her silver crown over one eye. The Eterno Padre was there also, and he doubtless bestowed additional protection. He was a florid and much-draped Eterno Padre, looking with utter amazement at the Cross which had been thrust into his outstretched hands. But if the Cross puzzled the Guatemalan Deity, the small pilgrims, whose bodies were composed in dignity even while asleep, were within his comprehension and received his approval.

We are not merely exemplars of our race. We are admirably, or not so admirably, individual entities. The blood in the veins of the little maids was brave Indian blood. Their bones were the strong, small bones of the Guatemalan highlands. But, after all, seven and six years old are only seven and six. And at four one is—even although the daughter of a cacique—still hardly more than a baby.

The afternoon shower, coming suddenly, woke the sleeping children, who scampered to shelter too late to escape a

soaking. Señor and their father appeared in a hurry, and all of them ran to the waiting boat. It was unfortunate they must cross the lake in the rain, but it was imperative to reach home before dark. The storm would pass and they could dry themselves before the return trip by automobile.

The boatman was waiting at the wheel, and so were waiting, also, a dozen rooting and wriggling pigs and a shipment of pottery jugs. These, too, must be conveyed across the rain-splashed water before night.

Chug—chug—and the launch starts. Squeal—squeak—and the pigs express their opinion of such transportation. The little girls stand beside their father, their carrying-cloths muffled around their necks. The smallest one—the four-year-old—ventures to lean against the paternal knee. Six and seven stand bolt upright, surveying without comment the ominous surface of the lake. And now the launch pitches; the pigs, each tied by one leg, squeal; the pots, packed for the market, roll upon the deck but miraculously escape destruction. The clouds blacken; the rain drops like a solid substance from the sky. And then the chug of the motor ceases. The gasolene has given out. Now it is necessary for the boatman to give the wheel to Señor, while he himself rows back to Santiago. Now it is necessary to keep one's balance upon a slippery floor which assumes a different angle every moment; now one must dodge a hurtling earthen pot which rolls across the cockpit to crash itself in the impact. Three of the sorely tried travellers upon this chaotic barque have been carried far this day. They are wet and weary. They have had enough. Nevertheless, they stand stoically, the rain upon their heads, and they make no gesture, utter no syllable of protest.

The boatman returns; the gasolene is poured into the

tank; the engine starts—sputters; the launch trembles; the engine stops. There is water in the newly-shipped gasoline. This, surely, is an excessive turn of the screw! Señor curses beneath his breath, the pigs shriek angrily at the news, although why they should be in a hurry to reach the butcher is hard to say. A sudden—a cataclysmic—crash of thunder climaxes it all. And, at long last, the three little girls capitulate to their years and to their sex. Simultaneously they lift their carrying-cloths and drop them over their heads—over their faces. They withdraw definitely from the tumult and the shouting—the crashing of the spheres. They make concession to human frailty. . . .

The gasoline finally ignites. The engine purrs. The launch proceeds across the lake. The pigs subside. The pots cease to roll. Señor controls his imprecations. But the once intrepid excursionists stand with their faces covered.

Before the launch reaches Atitlan, the storm has passed. The sun is shining as the automobile starts, with Señor and Juan on the front seat and the three miniature Persephones—ravished and restored—behind. They have been obliged, during the transit from motor boat to motor car, to lift their carrying-cloths. That is the last exertion which will be required of them, for the walk from the plaza, which until today has been the Great World, through the cornfields to the adobe hut, is not worth mentioning. Now, on the last lap, they definitely keep the carrying-cloths over their heads. They conceal their faces. They shut out the world. Thus they stand, enduring the revolution of two more desperate hours: one little—two little—three little Indians—images of fortitude in a whirling world.



IN THE CHURCH



FOR four centuries the Church of Santo Tomás, with its three belfry towers, with its finely severe yet charming façade, has stood opposite the Chapel of El Calvario. Both church and chapel are raised twenty or thirty feet by flights of stone steps, so that they seem to hold the plaza between them, as two white hands might extend themselves protectingly on either side of a precious object.

The stairway before Santo Tomás is so wide that the sweep of the lowest steps curve out beyond the walls of the church. As they mount, they narrow in diminishing semi-circles until

the top one is the width of the open door. High above these graceful steps the clouds of Guatemala hurry by, and along the rises billow other little puffs, not of cloud but of smoke. The smoke uncurls from earthen censers swung by brightly clad Indians who are kneeling in scattered groups before the door of Santo Tomás.

On Sunday morning the plaza, which, the night before, was empty, is a whirlpool stirred and fed by an increasing trickle of tributaries. From over half a thousand square miles they come trotting: two thousand gaudily robed Indians, each woman with a bundle or a baby upon her back, each man with a burden on his shoulders or his head. By daybreak they are moving to and from tables set up alongside the street, under and out of booths which have sprung up like toadstools not only in the open plaza but insouciantly in the middle of the road. Crowded as are these booths and tables, most of the goods for sale—and most of the people who want to sell them—are on straw mats on the ground. Bags of raw cotton, measures of corn, chickens, pottery, blankets, candles, pigs, melons—among this miscellany the crowd eddies unceasingly. Sometimes a child whimpers or a pig squeals; somewhere a fife plays over and over again a monotonous series of notes. But except for these occasional noises, it is very quiet. Bare feet fall noiselessly on bare earth, and Indian voices are low. The plaza is like a medieval fair, reflected in its motion and colour, but with no echo, in a vast mirror. Protecting it on either side, like two white hands, extend the Chapel of El Calvario and the Church of Santo Tomás.

On the platform before the chapel a few Indians kneel before a smoking pile of incense. Across the plaza, on the lowest

step of the stairway to the church, there rises, from a crude stone altar, more clouds of aromatic smoke. Several Indian men stand tending this fire, their women squatting beside them until they shall be finished, while farther up before the open door—a dark arch in the white façade—kneel others, swinging censers, their backs to the panorama of the plaza.

The church is long and lofty, its white-washed walls of stucco, its white-washed raftered ceiling of wood. But, passing the screen which half shields the door, one is not conscious of ceiling or walls, of unglazed windows or faraway high altar. This is not because these features are partly obscured by the haze of incense drifting in from outside. It is because all the depth, all the glow, all the profound movement of the place is lower, is on the dark stone floor.

Upon this floor, from door to sanctuary—upon the sanctuary steps themselves—there flicker, there burn, there shine like lowly stars, a hundred hundred lighted candles. Standing upon the ancient stones without the intermediation of any holders, these tapers are arranged in parallel lines and in symmetrical groups, forming a constellation that extends the length of the nave. The incense rises towards the ceiling; the candles burn upon the floor, so that all the interest of the extraordinary scene is below at one's feet.

At first, on stepping in we see only the points of fire and the dark stones. But as our eyes grow accustomed to the dusk, they see that between the rows of tapers are placed offerings: leaves arranged in neat order, a row of pine-needle clusters, four ears of maize, a piece of money, bunches of herbs meticulously spaced, petals of flowers scattered according to some understood plan. The flames burn on either side these votives, and behind the flames, with heads bowed or with hands

upraised, kneel the donors of these primitive sacrifices, the worshippers at these humble altars. A hundred—two hundred—Indians are kneeling thus in adoration, in supplication, in ecstasy. Their bare legs and feet upon the stark stones, the brilliancy of their costumes subdued by smoke, they kneel, they burn their candles, they place their offerings. From their moving lips issues a mighty murmur of which each individual note is soft, but whose composite volume swells like the ocean. With complete unself-consciousness they are praying out loud, in limpid Spanish, in whispering Quiché. They pray to God to bless their crops and they place maize between the candles to make their meaning clear. They pray to their dead—for their repose and for their aid—and for each departed spirit they place and light a candle. They pray to be healed of their infirmities, to receive justice from the Alcalde, for peace within their families. They give thanks for the birth of children, and of all these various concerns they speak simply and directly and at length to God, to the Blessed Virgin, and to Jesus Christ Her Son.

The long rows of absorbedly kneeling figures are not the only ones in the church. There is constant quiet shifting before the side altars. Women with babies on their backs stand before the statue of Saint Sebastian and cross themselves. Men, bent under huge burdens, kiss a candle and hold it up with both hands towards a blackened painting of the Nativity. Before the communion rail kneels a youth in a new suit embroidered with flowers and birds, beside him a girl, her black hair braided and twenty silver chains around her neck. They remain unmoving—oblivious to everything, to everyone, around them—before good Saint Peter with his keys and good Saint Paul with his sword; before the Eterno Padre who looks

down upon them with His beard, His cross, and His dove. An older man with a serious face is standing before this couple. He gestures with a tall lighted candle; he blesses them; he makes the sign of the cross; he prays, and through the Quiché monosyllables come the reverent words "Nuestra Señora," which is Spanish for "Our Lady" and "Nuestro Señor Jesu Cristo."

And now a black-cassocked priest accompanied by two barefooted, brown-skinned little sacristans is proceeding with many pauses up the nave. Over each humble constellation he stops, and in sonorous Latin offers the prayer for the dead. He dips the silver sprinkler into the silver basin and scatters holy water upon those earth-borne points of flame.

The supplicants bow their heads, but as the black-frocted figure, having completed its priestly function from door to sanctuary steps, turns to leave, many dark eyes are raised to follow with love the form of their padre, who can so miraculously intervene for the souls of the departed, who can baptize the joyfully welcomed new-born son or the less joyfully welcomed daughter, who will give ear to their sorrows and their sins, and who, although he is no longer so young as when he had first come to them, will rise in the cold of darkest night and travel on foot if need be over mountains and through streams bearing to some dying Indian the holy oils of Extreme Unction.

The padre, noticing visitors, comes up to welcome us and invite us to his house directly adjoining.

We pass through a side door of the church and find ourselves in a patio with a garden in the centre and *corredores* enclosing the four sides. The *corredores* are old: their tiled roofs sag with the weight of centuries; their balustrades and

the benches placed against them are weather-warped by four hundred years. But the roses are new born, the lilies unsullied by the fading of a day, the marguerites might have been embroidered that morning upon an angel's robe. Against the white-washed walls sparkle oranges and pomegranates—so gay, so young, the fruit and flowers in the cloister which is crumbling and decaying, dreaming of Spain.

The padre courteously invites us into his study, originally one of the cells of the monastery which had surrounded the patio. He is happy to talk with fellow-countrymen: it is many years since he has seen the United States.

In answer to our questions he tells us about the Indians with whom he has lived so long, so intimately, and with increasing affection. Thirty-three thousand are in the sixty-four cantons of his parish—he is, he explains, merely a parish priest. Thirty-three thousand Indians scattered over five hundred miles, and a handful of *ladinos* congregated chiefly in the town. The Indians are very poor: to buy candles they must sometimes go without food, yet they manage to maintain the Church of Santo Tomás and the Chapel of El Calvario and to procure a few pesos for the padre's necessities.

As in the days when the whole populace, high and low, about Rheims, or Chartres, or Pisa, lived only for the joy of worship and rejoiced only in the glory of the Cathedral which their ancestors had, through many generations, erected, and which they, each individual to the extent of his power, supported, so it is still in the town of Santo Tomás.

Although he is busy every moment, the padre never has to urge them to keep the feasts of the Church or such observations as they understand. An Indian mother will walk

thirty—forty—miles from a place where there is no resident priest, bringing her baby to be baptized. Indians from cantons where there is no cemetery will carry their dead over the mountains to Chichicastenango so that they may be buried to the accompaniment of bells and bombs and drums and skyrockets.

As for the meaning of certain ceremonies which we have noticed, well, the padre must admit—he smiles a little deprecatingly—that they are not all in strict accordance with the usual ritual of the Catholic Church. The Indian mind, he explains painstakingly, is not constituted to comprehend certain abstract doctrines of Catholic theology, such as the mystery of transubstantiation. Therefore he, as a conscientious priest, may not give them Holy Communion. Only the *ladinos*, who are better educated, may receive all the sacraments. Since the government insists upon a civil marriage at the Alcalde's before permitting a religious ceremony, and since the charges for the former are excessive, the Indians have fallen into the way of dispensing with both civil and ecclesiastical formalities. But they live together as man and wife more faithfully than the *ladinos* who can afford the fee for the civil ceremony and may, therefore, enjoy the religious one afterwards.

The padre pauses and apologizes. He had wished his visitors to tell him about the United States, and here he is taking up all the time talking about his beloved Indians! But the truth of the matter is that he—a priest and a white man—is continually in wonder before the devotion of his brown-skinned parishioners. Religion is the most important, the most joyful, part of their lives. It is integral in every deed

and thought. They would die—they frequently suffer—for the right to worship according to their beliefs and the customs of their race.

The padre has been criticized for permitting the Indians to burn candles upon the floor of the church, but as long as he is shepherd of his flock they may place them there. The censers, we may have noticed, are earthen affairs which they make themselves. Curiously enough, they are precisely the same pattern and material as those used by their pagan ancestors. Their incense is the domestic copal used by the Mayas in dubious rites fifteen hundred years ago. Those round stones indented in the centre which they sometimes use as candle-holders had been hurled as weapons of defence by those same Mayas. The elder we saw gesturing with the taper over the kneeling couple was performing a sort of marriage ceremony which, while it is not specifically forbidden by the Church, whose policy has ever been to respect the customs of every country, might nevertheless be called—irregular.

The padre leans forward. The longer he lives among them the more he knows that here, in his parish of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, here in the Church of Santo Tomás, God is close to His children.

By the same author

ESSAYS AND TRAVEL

Sweden, the Land and the People
Our Common Road
The House of Friendship
A Garden Rosary
The Romantic Shore
Cape Cod New and Old
The Old Coast Road from Boston to Plymouth
New Roads in Old Virginia
Central America and the Spanish Main
South America, the West Coast and the East

NOVELS

The House by the Windmill
The High Altar
Into What Port?

A PLAY

Miss Coolidge

*(These titles have been published under the names
of either Agnes Edwards or Agnes Edwards Rothery.)*

